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"GABRIELLE," SAID BARRY, "SURELY I MAY SPEAK NOW? DARLING, I HAVE LOVED YOU LONG AND FAITHFULLY."

AN INIQUITOUS MARRIAGE.

By the Author of "At the Eleventh Hour,"
"More Kith than Kin," etc., etc.

[A NOVELETTE.]

COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.

CHAPTER I.

"It is quite impossible, Barry," said Mrs. Castlemaine, with conviction. "Not even to oblige you can I do this thing. Why, all our friends would cut us."

"Very well, then, mother, you must accept the consequences," Barry answered, with a weary sigh. "Nothing but extreme

necessity would have made me proffer such a request; you don't suppose I am enamoured with Iniquity Smith, or in the least wishful to become personally acquainted with his daughter?"

"Well, but I do not understand. When you talk about consequences, what do you mean?"

"This, mother; that the Sully mines were a swindle, and unless I can pay up my shares, Barry Castlemaine, gentleman and merchant, will be declared bankrupt."

"Barry!"

The cry broke from mother and her three daughters, simultaneously.

"It is true. I wanted to spare you all anxiety, but you would not let me. I have known this for three days, and knowing it,

went to Smith to negotiate a loan. He met me fairly, to my surprise, actually asking only five per cent. interest; but just when I thought everything was well settled, he said, 'I lend you this sum on these terms, conditionally. Mr. Castlemaine, I have a daughter, who is about to return from school, and I do not wish her to return to my house. She does not know my enviable title or reputation, and she must not learn it. I love her, and am ambitious for her. I would like to see her well married, and so I ask your mother and sisters to receive her, introduce her to their own set; I know it is the best in Buckley, and give her every advantage that they themselves enjoy.'"

"What consummate impudence!" cried Frances, the eldest girl, and Estelle, the

Next Week Two Complete Stories.

second, added, "It is absurd to think for a moment we could associate with the daughter of 'Iniquity Smith,' still more so that she should come here."

"You forget," said Nora, the youngest, very gently, "that this is the condition attached to the loan. And I am really sorry for poor Miss Smith."

Barry flashed a kindly look at his favourite sister.

"Thank you, Nora. Now, mother, it is for you to decide. I am off now to Smith's to accept or decline his help, according to your decision. Which is it to be?"

"You are sure, Barry, matters are quite as bad as you say? You do not exaggerate?"

"I do not. But if you cannot reconcile yourself to Smith's terms, say so; only I tell you candidly, in such a case all we have must go. On the other hand, in six months I can conquer my difficulties, and once more be secure in my position—this, with Smith's help. And he has promised to pay handsomely for his daughter's maintenance."

"I have no alternative; tell him I agree."

"Thank you, mother. You have relieved my anxiety concerning yourself and the girls."

And putting on his hat, Barry prepared to leave them; but Frances cried,—

"Oh! this is too horrible! I shall not stay at home whilst that girl is here."

"I know I shall hate her," added Estelle; "she is sure to be vulgar and mean."

But Nora stole to Barry's side.

"I will try to love and be good to her, dear, for your sake," she said, very softly, and as before, he thanked her with a look, whilst to her sister he said,—

"You perfectly understand that Miss Smith is to be treated courteously in my house; and Frances, it is out of the question that you should leave home just now; the expenses would be too great;" then he went out to his unsavoury interview.

And as soon as he was gone a great clamour of tongues began.

Mrs. Castlemaine was tearful and indignant, and her two eldest daughters simply furious; only little Nora held a discreet silence.

"I don't believe you care in the least," said Frances, angrily. "You do not think how unpleasant it will be to have that girl always with us."

"I wonder what people will call us now," Estelle remarked, plaintively. "Until now we have been styled the 'Three Graces,' and this girl will spoil everything; she is bound to be ugly and inelegant."

"In which case she will make an excellent foil," smiled Nora, pacifically.

In the meantime Barry hurried towards the large, gloomy old house where "Iniquity" (otherwise Joseph) Smith lived.

The money-lender met him graciously, a most rare and noteworthy thing, and bidding him be seated, plunged at once into business.

"Here is the money, Mr. Castlemaine," laying one shrivelled, yellow hand upon a heap of notes, "and it is yours as soon as I know your decision."

"I consent to your terms," the young man answered, briefly and coldly. "There is no help for it."

"Very well, sir; but you quite understand my daughter is to be treated as an honourable guest. I can pay you handsomely. I am not a poor man," boastfully; "and she shall have the best of everything. But just another word with you. You are not to seek to win her affections."

"That is very unlikely, sir," coldly and scornfully. "You need have no fear."

"But promise me, on your honour as a gentleman, that you will never address Gabrielle as a lover."

"I promise," lightly, thinking all the while that Smith was the last man to whose family he should wish to be allied. "I am not a marrying man."

"And you think my girl is not good enough for you, eh?" shrewdly. "Let me tell you she will be a great catch. I shall leave her a fortune which would make you open your eyes. But I don't intend she should marry a mere private gentleman like yourself. My Gabrielle shall be a lady of title—shall queen it with the best of them—so understand you need have no hopes in that direction."

The young man's face flushed crimson, and his eyes flashed haughty defiance at the vulgar old money lender.

"Some men allow money to cover all shortcomings, such as low birth and breeding, but I am not one of them. If ever I marry my wife will be one of my own standing."

"I am glad to hear it; it makes matters more pleasant between us," retorted Smith, coolly. "And now for our final arrangements. My girl comes to Buckley to-morrow. I am going to fetch her here, but I shall give her into your charge or your mother's at the station. From time to time I shall see her—oh! not at your house, Mr. Castlemaine. I know how I should be received there. But I shall appoint some place of meeting. And, sir, I rely on you to keep my name clean before her. The child loves me—trusts me. There's no need to tell her what folks say of me," and he looked almost appealingly into Barry's proud, honest face, which softened a little towards him.

"From me she shall hear nothing," and gathering up the notes he took a hasty leave, pondering all the homeward way over Smith and his daughter.

How strange it was to find that crooked, wrinkled, money-loving man had one soft spot in his evil heart.

What sort of creature was she who had inspired him with such passion? And what a beautiful name she had—Gabrielle! There was poetry in the sound. She was to be pitied, too, having such a father. Iniquity Smith was only too well-known at Buckley as an unprincipled usurer—a man who had no mercy on any that were wretched enough to fall into his hands—a modern Shylock, who exacted and took his pound of flesh without pity and without remorse. And yet he loved his child!—ay, even more than he had loved her fair young mother, who, learning all too soon what manner of man she had married, drooped and died, leaving behind her little infant daughter.

Ah! who could tell what love the man had lavished on the child; how, despite his evil, wicked life, he had striven to keep hers pure; and as soon as she was old enough had placed her at a first-class school, the principal of which was a gentle, motherly woman.

And all through those long years—for Gabrielle was now eighteen—he had sedulously kept her from Buckley, so that her native place was as strange to her as an African desert would have been. And she regarded her father as the noblest of men; even found something beautiful in his furred, hawk-like face.

Every vacation found "Iniquity" Smith at the school-house, ready to take his darling to some haunt of health and pleasure; every vacation the love between them deepened and strengthened, and all Gabrielle's longing was to see her home, the place of her birth and her dear, dead mother's short married life.

And now at last the time had come—the happy, happy time to which she had so long looked forward. She was going home!—and oh! how she would endeavour to make

that home a happy place for her dear father!

How she would study his wishes, minister to his wants, so that he would wonder how he had contrived to exist so long without her.

With such thoughts as these she filled her last day at school, and as she dressed for her journey prayed Heaven to make her worthy her father and a blessing to him.

Poor child! poor child! He came at last; and those who knew him best would have failed to recognise "Iniquity" Smith in this flushed and tremulous man, with eager, passionate eyes and outstretched hands.

In an instant Gabrielle was safe in his embrace, her arms about his neck, her fresh face lifted to his, her dewy lips pressed lovingly upon his.

With an infinitely tender touch he smoothed her beautiful hair; with wonderful love he looked into her deep grey eyes, murmuring her name often in the gentlest tone.

She was dear and sacred to him. So many hopes, so much love, so much ambition hovered about her. In her his redemption lay—if, indeed, redemption were possible.

"We shall be so happy—so happy!" she half sobbed, clinging about him. "I will make our home so bright and glad. I will learn to be a clever housekeeper, for your sake, dearest father."

Still he stroked her hair, still looked into the depths of her clear grey eyes.

"My Gabrielle! my Gabrielle!"

"And we will laugh together over my little blunders and mistakes," the girl went on, dreamily. "You will never be angry with me, daddy? Never!"

"My darling, no!"

"And in time I shall grow wiser, better able to manage for you, to help you in your work. Miss Somerset says I write a very clear hand, and I am not so very bad at figures. I must spare your dear eyes and hands as much as I can. Poor dear father, all these lines have come through sorrow for my mother, and caring and working for me." With that she tenderly touched his furred brow and wrinkled cheek. "But there shall not be another added to them. And now, dear, I must wish Miss Somerset and the girls good-bye, and then for home!"

As she ran lightly away his heart smote him that he had deceived her; but it was for her ultimate good, and, come what would, his child should never know him as he was; that would kill her, and drive him mad.

He would never let her learn the dark secrets of his life; she should never see the wretched creatures who vainly prayed for mercy, or railed at him as the author of their ruin.

Presently she returned, flushed and a little tearful.

"I'm ready now, dear."

"You have been crying, Gabrielle."

"A little, dear. It was hard to leave them all. I have been very happy here; they were all so good to me, and all had such a kind word for me, that my heart is full."

He drew her little hand in his arm.

"Come, darling, let us be going. We have a long journey before us, and no time to spare. I mean to get a carriage to ourselves, because I have such a great deal to tell you. We can get a cab from here, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes! there are several round the corner always," and she stepped out into the beautiful spring sunshine with him, light of foot, lighter still of heart.

Once securely locked in the compartment, knowing no interruption could occur before they reached Buckley, "Iniquity" Smith

braced himself to the task before him. With a loving, yet nervous glance at the girl, he said,—

"My dear, you know I am not a gentleman," and there paused, because the beautiful grey eyes opened upon him wide and surprised.

"I know you have to work very hard for a living," Gabrielle said, gently; "but that does not make you the less a gentleman. I am very proud of you dear."

"A great sense of shame came upon him; but he said, quite calmly,—

"I like to hear you say that, Gabrielle. Some children despise their parents' calling, whilst they profit by their labours; but it is of yourself I want to talk. My home, our home, dear child, is all unfitted for such a bright young creature as you are. I am rarely at liberty, and the hours would be long and heavy for you; so I have made arrangements for you to reside with a great and kind lady."

She looked at him in blankest surprise and dismay.

"Am I not to be your housekeeper, your companion and help?" she asked, agitatedly.

"My dear child, I am rich enough to afford both housekeeper and help; but the house is so gloomy, and you would have so little companionship, that you would soon grow dull and pale; and, besides all this, I am but a tradesman, and cannot introduce you to good society, so I wish to place you with Mrs. Castlemaine, a great lady, who will take you to all sorts of places where you may enjoy yourself, and from time to time I shall see you; but remember, darling, my one aim in life is to make you happy!"

She clung to him then, weeping sorely.

"You think of me always," she said, sobbingly, "when all the while my thoughts and my care should be for you. Oh, my father! my father! do not send me to this lady, who knows nothing of me; let me live with you, share your labours, lighten your cares. I shall be happier so."

As he loosed her clinging arms his keen eyes were moist with tears.

"Hush, hush, my dearest one! You are all the world to me, and it is for your good I send you to Mrs. Castlemaine. She has three lovely daughters (they are called the 'Three Graces'), and one son; but mind, Gabrielle, you are not to fall in love with him; and now dry your eyes. I want you to look your best when we reach Buckley, and never fear, little woman, but I shall see you often."

Such pain—such disappointment she felt, but she hid her deep emotion for his sake, and only lay quite quiet on his breast, wondering a little vaguely why the day seemed suddenly so dark.

"Gabrielle, why are you so quiet? Are you disappointed?"

"A little, dear. You see I thought we were to be together always; but it is nothing, it will soon pass. Only father, my dear and honoured father, let me see you often—often; my heart is so hungry for your love!"

"You have that always child, and it is for your own good I send you from me. Don't you think I love you more than—than life or wealth? But I am all unfit to tutor a young girl, and so I am sending you to my friend Mrs. Castlemaine; she will train you well in all those duties it is so essential you should perform ably."

Gabrielle was silent; her pale young face had grown paler still, but there was a sweet submission and utter self-forgetfulness upon it which augured well for "Iniquity" Smith's plans. He bent and kissed her fondly.

"You will be a great lady yet, Gabrielle;

you will marry some grandee and be happy; but in your happiness you must not quite forget the father who loved you so well."

She clung the closer to him.

"I shall never forget you whilst Heaven grants me memory and breath; and do not speak of marriage, dear. I am so young, and I so long to devote all my life to you, father. Oh, let me come home to you soon."

"Buckley! Buckley! Change here for Croxhall, shouted the porters, as the train rushed into the busy station, and the next moment Gabrielle was standing with her father upon the platform. But neither Mrs. Castlemaine or Barry met them, only a sleek servant who knew "Iniquity" Smith well. Touching his hat, with a grin he said—

"If you please, sir, Mr. Castlemaine has been called away unexpectedly, and the mistress feared the night air; but she has sent the carriage to meet Miss Smith."

So "Iniquity" kissed his child, and bidding her good-bye, strode towards his own home.

CHAPTER II.

SHE stood in the open doorway, a slim, pale girl, with scarcely any beauty, unless one excepted her luminous eyes, and grave sweet mouth. Not a girl to attract much attention, or to take men's hearts by storm; beside the Castlemaine girls she looked small and insignificant, and yet she had the air and gait of a lady, which caused Mrs. Castlemaine some surprise.

She rose and bowing in a stately fashion said,—

"You are Miss Smith?"

"Yes, madam; and my father bade me thank you for extending your kind protection to me," the girl answered simply, and her voice was low and sweet.

"It is nothing," stily; "let me introduce you to my daughters. This is Frances, this Estelle, and my youngest Nora!"

The two elder girls bowed and scanned the stranger with cold critical eyes, but Nora put out a small friendly hand, saying,—

"I hope you will be happy with us. Mamma would not Miss Smith like to go to her room? May I take her to it?" And receiving permission she led the way to a large and airy apartment, daintily furnished in pale blue and crimson.

"I hope you will like this," said Nora. "I persuaded mamma to give it to you because it is so cheerful. Oh, don't trouble to change your dress, we will not stand on ceremony to-night," and her pretty eyes grew sympathetic as she saw that Gabrielle's were full of tears she was striving to repress.

"I am afraid you feel lonely without your old school friends and companions."

"It is not that," Gabrielle said, in a low voice; "but I am so disappointed. I hoped my dear father was bringing me home to be his constant associate, his health and comfort, if indeed he needed comfort. I had built so many castles in the air, planned so many pleasures, thought of all I should do when we were together, and then—then—"

"It was a blow to you to learn he had other plans for you?"

"Yes, yes; but he does it all for my good, my dear father! He says he cannot teach me the things I should know, and (this pathetically), I have no mother. He wants to make me a great lady, and I shall never be that. Oh! Miss Castlemaine, I wish you knew him as I do. What a great and tender heart his is, and how he thinks of me first always—always! He says he is not a gentleman; but then he is so kind—so noble—that one may easily forget he is low-born and a tradesman."

To Nora, who knew "Iniquity" Smith's true character, there was something terribly touching in the girl's faith in, and admiration for, him. Moved to keenest pity, she leant forward and kissed the pale, sweet face.

"I hope we shall be very good friends," she said, gently; and to her surprise Gabrielle caught and held her close.

"I shall love you always for your kindness; just at first I was afraid I was very unwelcome here."

"Mamma and the girls are not offensive," Nora answered, uneasily.

"I am very stupid; no doubt I misunderstood them. My father told me I had many things to learn, and that I was to copy Mrs. Castlemaine and your sisters in all respects; but I think I shall never gain that repose of manner he so admires."

"You are very nice as you are," laughed Nora, "and I must plead guilty to timidity and awkwardness. I am always happiest at home; and now, Miss Smith, if you are quite ready we will go downstairs."

"I am ready—but—but—would you mind very much calling me Gabrielle?"

"You have a lovely name!" said Nora.

"It was my mother's, and people tell me I am like her; and then they went down together, Nora smiling and cheerful, Gabrielle timid and blushing.

Scarcely any conversation took place at dinner; but the girl was conscious that her every action was watched, her every little word listened to with ill-repressed criticism, and the flush on her cheek grew painful.

But no fault could be found with her in any respect, and when the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room, and Gabrielle was asked to play, she consented without any foolish or underbred reluctance, and surprised her audience by her taste and skill.

She was not a brilliant player, but her touch was perfection, and the melodies she chose full of pathos and beauty.

Frances lifted her eyebrows disdainfully, and at the close of a weird Irish air said,—

"You should be a professional, Miss Smith."

"Oh! that is a great compliment," said Gabrielle, with innocent pleasure, and the two elder girls exchanged sarcastic, contemptuous smiles; but Nora, who was ready to cast oil upon troubled waters, said, gently,—

"I think so too, and I wish I had been the lucky recipient of it; my performance is always so very crude."

And so it was as the days went by, Nora always standing between Gabrielle and her sisters' contempt, until the girls' love for her new friend became second only to that she bore her father.

It hurt her horribly when she spoke of her father to see the quick, disdainful glances exchanged, and to receive no reply to her loving praise of him. She concluded it was because he was "a tradesman," a very vague term to her, and soon began to speak of him only to gentle Nora.

She had been a week with them when she received a note from him, asking her to join him outside the Castlemaine gates at seven-fifteen the following evening.

She went eagerly to Mrs. Castlemaine.

"Madam; my father begs your permission to see me to-morrow," she said, a little tremulously.

"Of course you must go. I have no control over your actions. At what time do you start?"

Gabrielle told her meekly, chilled by her frosty manner.

"It will be quite dark, Miss Smith; but that is your father's concern."

So with that Gabrielle had to rest content; but on the morrow Nora assisted "to

make her pretty," and with a glad and thankful heart the girl started.

Outside the gates stood a closed carriage, and as she drew near "Iniquity" Smith jumped out.

"My dear, my dear!" she said, kissing the sweet, innocent face, how good it is to have you all to myself.

"Then why not let me be with you always, father?" she urged.

"No, no, child. I must not stand in the way of your welfare. I am a rough, blunt fellow; but you must be a lady. Get in, dear, and as we drive you shall tell me all about yourself and new friends."

Obediently so far as to get into the carriage, she asked—

"Where are we going?"

"Just a nice long country drive; it's true we cannot see much, but we shall be content just to feel we are together."

"Yes, dear, yes; oh, how good it is to be with you! What a happy girl I should be, if—"

"Now, Gabrielle, that is a forbidden subject. Tell me of Mrs. Castlemaine and your new life."

So she told him all, hiding nothing save her knowledge of the contempt in which the Castlemaines held him, and the coldness with which all but Nora treated her.

And when she spoke so lovingly, so gratefully of her, so rapturously of her grace and beauty, the man's face flushed as he thought such kindness to his little girl should not go unrewarded.

What a happy drive that was! and how sorry both were when it ended; how loth they were to part, and when Gabrielle left him her father stood watching until she was safely housed, then, whispering to himself,—"She shall be a lady, and as happy as gold can make her," allowed himself to be driven home.

With the next morning came Barry, who, after the first greetings were exchanged, asked if Miss Smith proved much of a *bête noir* to the household.

"She is not offensive," drawled Frances, "only insignificant and underbred."

"Well, Nora, what is your opinion?"

"I think her very sweet and lovable, and only wonder she should be her father's daughter!"

"I do not think Nora competent to form any opinion on the subject," Frances said, sharply. "Her tastes and inclinations are most distinctly plebeian!"

"Let the child alone," Barry remarked, good temperedly. "Nora's impressions are generally pretty near the truth. None the less, I heartily wish I could have spared you the infliction of Miss Smith's society. By the way, she has a lovely name."

"Gabrielle! yes, Barry; and the name suits her beautifully!"

"A parcel for Miss Nora, please," said a neat maid, entering quietly.

"For me? Oh, Barry, what is it? Who can the sender be? It is heavy, too, for so small a parcel!"

"Solve the mystery by opening it, Nora," said Barry, laughing. "Here let me cut the string. First, a morocco case. What comes next? Good gracious, child, look here!" and he held up to her view a handsome gold bracelet, set with five flashing diamonds. To the bracelet was attached a slip of paper on which was written:—"In gratitude for kindness shown my daughter. Joseph Smith."

"Oh!" cried Nora. "Oh, Barry, I cannot accept such a gift from such a man."

"I am afraid you must, my dear. If you refuse you would seriously hurt this girl, of whom you apparently think so much; and really it would be a most ungracious act to return it. 'Pon my honour, the man must have some good in him after all!"

"Impossible!" said Frances, with an envious glance at the bracelet. "If he had he would not have won his very elegant *sobriquet*."

"And since his daughter has been with us," said Estelle, "things have been so unpleasant. We have had to endure such horrid interrogations as to our reasons for receiving her; and, really, I find a great difference in our hundred and one dear friends' reception of us. Oh, yes, Barry, you may say it is all imagination!"

"Hush!" whispered Nora. "Gabrielle is coming. I heard her step outside."

As the door opened Barry looked up with a sense of curiosity to the girl standing timidly there.

In her dainty morning dress, with the soft light in her clear grey eyes, the half-appealing smile upon her lips, she was almost pretty, and certainly interesting.

"Come in," said Nora. "This is only Barry, and you must know each other."

The young man rose with cold courtesy. It was impossible for him quite to forget her parentage, or believe she could be good and pure, having such a father. Neither did Gabrielle show to advantage before him. She was shy and constrained, speaking only in monosyllables, until Nora, showing her bracelet, said,—

"See, Gabrielle, what a lovely present your father has sent me? It is quite too good and handsome for me, and I am afraid it would be very wrong to accept it."

"No, no," cried the girl, flashing into animation and prettiness. "Dear Nora, do not return it. It would hurt him so, and—and he can well afford it. I told him how good you are to me, and he is grateful. Oh, kind friend; do not pain him by rejecting his gift. I could not bear to think of it."

She had forgotten all but Nora and her father then, and in her love for him—her anxiety to spare him pain—she caught the girl's hands, and lifted entreating eyes to hers.

Perhaps Nora might still have proved obdurate, for with all her gentleness she was a very proud little woman, but the expression of Barry's face decided her.

"Dear Gabrielle, it shall be as you wish, just this once. And you must tell your father how much I admire his gift, but how greatly I would have preferred something less valuable."

"I will tell him, Nora; although, indeed, he feels with me, nothing could be too lovely or good for you," Gabrielle said, simply.

Then, suddenly remembering she and Nora were not alone, she flushed scarlet, grew nervous, and stole to a seat by an open window.

Barry felt curious; this girl was so unlike what he had pictured she would be. It seemed impossible that she could be in any way connected with "Iniquity" Smith: Her voice was low and refined, her face pure and good, though not beautiful, and her manner was that of a lady. But he could not yet overcome his repugnance to her, or her presence in his home. He was hardly pleased to find Nora so attached to her.

But that night, when Gabrielle's singing and playing had softened him a little towards her, he moved to her side, and sitting down, said—

"I hope you find your new home pleasant, Miss Smith!"

"It is very beautiful!" she answered, gently, "but it wants one thing—my dear father's presence. I know," as his face clouded, "I know you would not receive him. He is only a tradesman, and you do not understand how good and noble he is! If you did you would be proud to call him friend. It hurts me to think that where I

go he is never seen; that in all my pleasures he has no share. Poor father! Oh! I wish, with all my heart, that we were poor, for then we should be together."

For a moment Barry was more touched than he cared to show. But then came the thought she was playing a part, and his heart hardened towards her.

"You are not happy then?" he said, in a cold tone.

"I ought to be, remembering my father's care and Nora's kindness; but I want to be with him. Don't you know, Mr. Castlemaine, I have only him. He makes my world?"

As he looked keenly into the depths of those true grey eyes again compassion stirred within him.

"You are much attached to him; and, for your sake, I hope he will soon allow you to take up your quarters with him. But the house is so very gloomy."

"I should make it bright," she said quickly, "and Nora would come sometimes to visit us! My father would love her for my sake."

The idea of Nora visiting her usurer's house was repulsive to her brother. How he cursed the day when, trusting to specious representations he invested so largely in the Sully Mines; he had brought unbusiness and what he then thought degradation on himself and his belongings. So Gabrielle's remark, recalling all this to him, was unfortunate.

"Mr. Smith no doubt understands what is best for you," he said coldly, "and so prefers you should stay here," with which speech he moved away.

His annoyance was not decreased the next morning to find a note awaiting him from "Iniquity" Smith. What need was there of further correspondence between them, save in a strictly business form? This is what "Iniquity" wrote:—

"DEAR SIR—will you oblige me by coming round to my office this morning? I have a favour to ask you connected with Gabrielle. I shall remain at home till 12.30. Yours obediently,

"JOSEPH SMITH."

Fully resolved to grant the man no further concessions, Barry started for Smith's office in anything but a pleasant frame of mind. The usurer was alone, and evidently expecting him. He offered his hand, but Barry, refusing to see it, dropped in a chair, asking shortly what he wanted.

"Well, Castlemaine, you are not ignorant respecting my intentions concerning my daughter. The fact is, I should be glad of a little assistance from you."

"From me!" with lifted brows. "I beg pardon, but I am hardly a knight errant."

Smith frowned a little, but seeing the calmness of Barry's face went on placably,—

"I think I see a chance of a good settlement for Gabrielle. She is pretty and will be rich. She ought to marry well. I told you I meant her to win and wear a title, and there is every probability she will do so. A client of mine, who needs a wife with money, is returning to Buckley, and I want you to give him a chance of meeting my girl at your house."

"What is the aspirant's name?" coldly.

"Lord Frederick Maundrell."

"What!" shouted Barry. "Have you actually impudence enough to ask me to receive that blackguard—to make him acquainted with my mother and sisters?"

CHAPTER III.

"I DON'T suppose he would eat them!" retorted Smith, coolly, "and his rank is beyond question."

"As are his vices; and you must be mad to give your daughter to him. He is

only twenty-five, and yet has already run through a princely fortune, and would spend another in the same way if he had it. Surely Miss Smith deserves a better fate than the one you propose!"

"He would be kind to her. He dare not be otherwise; and I want to see my girl placed beyond all fear of scorn or neglect. If she were 'my lady' she would be secure; no one would dare tattle to her of her father. My poor Gabrielle!"

He spoke dreamily and to himself, but catching the amazement in Barry's eyes, laughed awkwardly,—

"I'm not quite without a soft spot, Mr. Castlemaine, although people say I am. Come, do me this favour. It is a Christian act, and I'll cancel half your debt. Invite Maundrell to your place."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" resolutely. "Look here, Smith, I am not a Puritan, but neither am I a profligate. If Maundrell dares to show his face at my door I will kick him from the spot, like the hound he is. Do you think anyone in Buckley will ever forget the scandal concerning him and poor Davy's young wife? Or the brutal way in which he treated little Polly Goodchild? Man, this thing is out of the question altogether; and if you wish Miss Smith to meet him you must remove her to your own home."

"I shall not do that. You agreed to receive her for six months, and I shall stick to our conditions. More than that, I shall exact the whole sum due to me from you."

"Of course you will. I expected no other, desired nothing else. It would be gall and wormwood for me to know I owed you any debt of gratitude. As for our conditions, of course I shall keep to them. Despite your scepticism, Mr. Smith, you will perhaps credit me with being a man of honour."

Smith looked at him with unwilling admiration.

"But for knowing that," he said, gruffly, "I should never have sent my girl to your house."

"But I don't suppose you will refuse to allow Gabrielle to meet my client here?"

"If you choose to thrust her into the way of danger that is no concern of mine."

No concern of his! And yet, as he walked home, through all his thoughts—through all his cares and anxieties—he was conscious of a vast pity for the pale-faced, grey-eyed girl "Iniquity" Smith called daughter.

He did not confide the story of the interview to his mother or Nora; but he found himself watching Gabrielle curiously, and wondering what lay before her.

In the afternoon he came upon her in his favourite room—the library. She was reading, and did not see him enter, and gave a little cry, when he said, quietly,—

"Am I intruding?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Castlemaine! I was only reading."

"And your book? What is the title?"

"*Eyre's Acquittal*. It is very sad, and I am wondering how Madcap will take the knowledge of her father's unconscious crime. Do you know the story?"

"No; tell me."

"I am thinking you should read it to fully understand it. Mr. Eyre married a wife many years younger than himself, whom he passionately loves. But he is a very jealous man, and one night in his sleep (perhaps prompted by jealous dreams) he steals downstairs to her room and murders her. But ever after he believes another guilty of the crime, until at last it is brought home to him that he is the murderer. He has a daughter, Madcap, and I think when she learned the truth it must have nearly broken her heart. I know that I could not have stood such a shock. It would be worse than death to learn my own dear father was less noble than he seems."

His heart ached for her then—so innocent, so trustful; and if one day the awakening should come he trembled to think of her suffering. But he only said, lightly,—

"You should not read such gruesome books. They are not good for you."

She smiled faintly.

"Oh, I like sad stories best; they are more true to life. The world is so full of sorrow, and wrong, and strife."

"But your life has been too sheltered for you to know much of these things!"

"It is true," she answered gravely, "my father has hidden from me, as far as he could, all things that might sadden or harm me. But I am sometimes tempted to believe it would be better for me to know more of the seamy side of life. Do not you think so, Mr. Castlemaine?"

"I hardly dare say. You see I have had very little opportunity of judging. We are scarcely more than strangers; but it is always best to train oneself to meet troubles. They are bound to come early or late."

She lifted her lovely eyes to his; and seeing the sudden contraction of his brow, the compression of his lips, she half put out her hand to touch his. Then, blushing scarlet, shrank back, saying, nervously,—

"You have not escaped the common lot. Oh! Mr. Castlemaine, I hope no great sorrow will ever come to Nora! It would kill her."

She read his sister's character so well. She was altogether so different to what he had imagined that, against his will, he began to be interested in her—to feel kindly disposed towards her; and his voice was cordial when he said,—

"You understand Nora, and love her well. Yes, I agree with you, she is unfitted to bear trouble—too gentle and sensitive. Sometimes I think she is not far removed from the angels."

"She has been as one to me," softly.

"All my life I shall love and reverence her."

That was a bond between them. Had Gabrielle been the most artful and skilful of coquettes she could not have chosen a surer way to his favour.

From that hour all animosity to her died out; and when the next day brought him a letter from her father, requesting she might dine with him and Lord Maundrell on the following Saturday, Barry felt both sorry for her and angry with Smith.

Saturday came, and Barry had promised to escort his mother and sister to a mild entertainment provided by several influential persons for the benefit of the Buckley schools, and as he waited impatiently for the ladies Nora appeared, bringing the reluctant Gabrielle with her.

"Doesn't she look lovely!" said Nora. "And I take great credit to myself because I am responsible for her *coiffure*. Is not the effect good?"

He was bound to confess it was. The girl's soft brown hair fell in little curls about her brow, and waved about the soft cheeks and throat, being gathered in a heavy coil low upon the neck.

Her beautiful eyes were bright with excitement and pleasure, and the shimmering white dress she wore seemed only to intensify the fairness of her skin.

She wore a quaint necklace of opals set in gold, but no bracelets disfigured the beauty of her arms, or marred their perfect contour.

"You come on me as a revelation!" Barry said, with a light laugh.

"You mean the chrysalis has become a butterfly?" answered Gabrielle, gaily; "or, in other words, that Cinderella is trans-

formed into a princess, and I owe it all to Nora."

"No, no! I had a good subject to work upon, and good materials to use. Hark! Gabrielle, the carriage is at the door, and you must not keep your father waiting. Good-bye, dear, and may your evening be very pleasant!"

The girl kissed her friend warmly, and then, with a graceful little courtesy to Barry, hurried noiselessly away, a smile on her lips, a great light in her eyes, for was she not going to her father?

"Poor little girl," said Barry, pitifully. "She is going, like Jephtha's daughter, to sacrifice. That old wretch will make her marry Maundrell!"

"Oh, Barry! Don't you think Mr. Smith loves her too well to force her to such a step?"

"I don't believe he would stop at anything to win his own ends."

"But Lord Maundrell is such a very bad man. Mamma has made us promise to have nothing to say to him. Indeed, I quite dread meeting him in society!"

"He is a brute!" Barry said, emphatically. "But many women will condone all his offences for the sake of his handsome face and ancient title. And old Smith candidly confessed he meant his daughter to be 'my lady.' She is too good, I think, for such a fate!"

"She is, Barry; and if I can help it I will never let her drift into it. Hush! here comes mamma!" and so no more was said on the subject.

Meanwhile Gabrielle reached the gloomy house her father called home. It did not look so dreary to-night, for there were lights in every window, and hired waiters ran to and fro with great bustle and celerity.

Her father met her in the hall. He was dressed as an ordinary gentleman, and looked somewhat absurd; but she saw nothing of this as she clung to him—half crying, half laughing in her gladness.

"How bonny you are!" he said, fondly.

"Upon my word, Gabrielle, you are growing quite a pretty girl! Now, dry those bright eyes and come with me. I have a friend waiting to know you!"

"A friend, father?" a little anxiously.

"Yes, a gentleman, young and handsome, and kind enough to share my hospitality, although I am only a tradesman and he a nobleman!"

He looked shrewdly at her, but she showed no excitement—only a little disappointment that they were not to be alone.

"Who is the gentleman, father?"

"Lord Maundrell!"

The name was familiar to her, though not the man's character; for Mrs. Castlemaine had strictly forbidden her daughters to divulge that. Knowing Smith's designs, she said—

"It is not our province to interfere, and marriage may reform Lord Frederick!"

So, all unconscious of what lay before her, the girl entered the gloomy drawing-room, where she looked so out of place; and as the soft rustle of her skirts made known her coming, a young man turned from one of the many windows, and lounged towards them.

But as his eyes rested on the girl's fair face his expression changed, and all the languor of his manner vanished.

He went through the ceremony with a grace and ease new in Gabrielle's experience of men, and she could not but acknowledge to herself that he was very handsome.

Then, too, he was so kind; and she sighed a little as she remembered Barry's usual frigidity. The latter had not one-tenth of Maundrell's personal attractions; but he

always inspired her with a sense of rest and trustfulness she did not feel in the young lord's presence.

After dinner she played and sang to them, and Lord Maundrell, hovering near, turned the pages of her music, and did not find the hours long or dull.

He had known many women—had fancied himself in love often—but Gabrielle was a new experience to him. Her perfect love, her absolute confidence in her father, touched even him, and he was sorry when the time came for her to leave.

"I may call upon you?" he asked, almost eagerly. "I know Castlemaine well."

But his host broke in,—

"They receive very few visitors just now, my lord. I do not think it advisable for you to call. They might consider it intrusive."

Maundrell understood only too well, and, flushing a little, said,—

"But I may hope to meet Miss Smith at no very distant date?"

"We shall be pleased to receive you at any time, my lord. Gabrielle is often with me; but at present I prefer she should reside with Mrs. Castlemaine, who has kindly volunteered to chaperon her. You see, her mother being dead, she could hardly reside here without a fitting companion, and I hate strange women about the place. Come, Gabrielle, let me make you comfortable. It is time you returned."

"Good-bye!" said the young man, offering his hand. "I have never spent such a happy evening!" and there was such an expression of admiration in his violet eyes that even innocent Gabrielle was startled. "I hope we shall meet again very soon!"

Then her father hurried her away, and throughout the homeward drive she thought of the young lord dreamily and pleasantly, but in the morning he occupied no place in her memory.

After that she often met him, for although Mrs. Castlemaine utterly refused to receive him, there were very few of the Buckley matrons so particular; and, to Barry's disgust, even his sisters were in time acquainted with the noble rake. Much against his will, and beginning with dislike and suspicion, day by day the young man's opinions concerning Gabrielle had changed; until now, when more than three months of her stay with them had passed, he woke to the knowledge that he loved her—ay, loved her with all the force and depth of his strong nature. And he was bound by a promise to her father to speak no word of love to her, to hint at no deeper feeling than friendship.

Even had he been free to speak it is doubtful if he would have done so then. There were old prejudices to overcome, old dislikes to be conquered, and it was no light thing for a man to accept "Iniquity" Smith as a member of his family—in a measure to suffer through the ill-odour attaching to him. And the very restraint he placed upon himself made his manner cold to Gabrielle, who wondered and sorrowed over it in secret.

Oh, the poor child! She loved him with all her innocent, faithful heart, and believing he despised, and even disliked her, felt her days and nights a heavy burden. Then, too, she could not mistake Lord Maundrell's attentions, and although she knew nothing of his evil and wicked past, she shrank from him instinctively, seeing with horror that her father favoured his suit.

And one day, when they drove out together, Smith spoke to her of the young man, looking keenly at her all the while.

"My dear, you should esteem yourself a lucky girl! To-day Lord Maundrell has proposed for you! He is young, handsome, highborn, and much in love with you, and I

have given him permission to speak to you. What shall you say to him?"

Her face and lips grew white, her hands were flung together wildly, but she contrived to say quite calmly,—

"What do you wish me to say?"

"I should be glad if you would say yes! I am growing an old man, and before I die I should like to see you happily married—not that I wish in any way to influence your decision; but this is the dearest desire of my heart."

She thought of Barry and his evident dislike to her; of Frederick and his very palpable love for her; and then all her memory was filled with recollections of her father's care and tenderness, the gifts and garlands he had showered upon her through all her life. She turned to him with a piteous gesture of self-abnegation.

"It shall be as you wish, dear!" she said; and although he knew her heart was not in the compact, he thought, "she will learn to love him and be happy," and so kissed her fondly!

CHAPTER IV.

The next day she dined with her father, and quite late in the evening Lord Maundrell was announced. He looked at the pale girl with evident love and admiration, and, making his way to her, sat down beside her. It was not long before Smith, with some plausible excuse, left them together, thus giving the young man the opportunity he desired. Gabrielle began to tremble, and the pallor of her face was more marked as Maundrell, leaning nearer, laid his hand on hers that trembled so sorely.

"Gabrielle," he said, in a caressing tone, "you know what it is I have come to say?"

"Yes," she answered, scarcely above a whisper, "my father has told me."

"My darling! I have loved you from the day I first saw you; but I did not venture to tell that! I am such a poor fellow for a girl like you to think about. And not until encouraged to believe myself not wholly distasteful to you did I dare to risk my all on this throw. Will you tell me I may hope?"

"Are you sure?" she asked, piteously—"are you sure that you love me, and that this is the best thing that could happen to you? Do not deceive me!"

"I know that it is the best!" with conviction. "Gabrielle, I am not a model fellow. I have done many things which you doubtless would consider wrong; but if you will only have me you can make me all you wish, for I would not give you one moment's uneasiness or pain. Say yes, dear!"

She lifted her eyes to his; they were very sad. Then she said, slowly,—

"My father wishes it, and you—you love me, and will be good to me. For my father's sake it shall be as you wish."

He would far rather she had forgotten her father altogether in this matter; but it was well to win her at any price. He loved her, and she was an heiress. He was not likely, either, to have any scruples as to the way her fortune was won. So he took the slender form in his arms and kissed the pale face passionately, and Gabrielle never resisted nor responded, but lay quite passive in his embrace. Only in her tortured heart she prayed to be alone, so as to face this dreadful thing that had befallen her.

Presently her father returned, and Maundrell, rising, flushed and triumphant, said,—

"Mr. Smith, you may congratulate me! Gabrielle has promised to marry me!"

and when her father kissed her, and she heard his words, she hardly regretted her sacrifice.

"My dear girl! my dear girl! you have made me most happy. I have nothing now left to wish for!"

The rest of that evening passed in a sort of dreadful dream. As yet she did not fully comprehend the depth of her misery; and even the badge on her finger, sign and seal of her slavery, meant little to her.

On the morrow she would understand how very sure Maundrell had been of winning her, to bring the betrothal ring with him.

The hours wore by, and she was glad indeed when Mrs. Castlemaine's carriage drove up to her father's door. She bade her lover a formal good-night; then turning to Smith, wound her arms about his neck, and laying her soft cheek to his withered face, whispered,—

"You will always love me, dear—always! You will remember that I have tried to please you in all things!" and then he felt that she was crying.

"You are tired and excited, my Gabrielle!" he said gently. "It has been an eventful night for you. Kiss me, and let me take you downstairs."

Implicitly she obeyed him, only pausing at the door to look wistfully at her young lord lover.

"You must forgive me that I seem so dull," she said with gentle courtesy. "I am not quite myself to-night."

Once out of his presence she clung to her father.

"Dear, tell me truly if I have done well? I am so ignorant and foolish that I feel afraid."

"You have done well, indeed! I am proud of you, my child!"

"Then I am satisfied," gently. "Good-night, dear father, good-night."

"You are not unhappy, my Gabrielle?"

"It is all so strange; but you have chosen for me, and you would not choose misery for me. Good-bye, my dear, good-bye!" and so he let her go, knowing in his inmost heart that Maundrell was all unworthy of her, and yet honestly believing he would make her happy. And what woman would not be proud to wear a title?

When she reached home she pleaded weariness, and begged to be allowed to go to her room; and she looked so ill that Nora insisted upon going with her.

"You poor child!" said the latter. "I am quite anxious concerning you. Are you really well? has anything unpleasant occurred?"

"I am well," in a dull tone; and as she removed her gloves Nora's quick eyes fell upon the hoop of diamonds she wore.

"Gabrielle what does that mean?" she asked in a terrified way.

"That I have promised to marry Lord Maundrell. It was my father's wish."

"No, no!" cried Nora, passionately.

"You must not, you shall not marry him. He is a bad man; he will only make you miserable! For the sake of the love I bear you, the happy hours we have spent together, listen to me."

"I must not," Gabrielle answered, dry-eyed and calm. "In this thing I please my father, and Lord Maundrell has told me he is very imperfect, but he says my influence will be all for his good."

"Do not believe him! He never kept a promise yet! He will break your heart, crush your spirit, disgust and disappoint you at every turn!"

Gently Gabrielle unwound the clinging arms.

"Dear and true friend, you are prejudiced. My father has told me of Mrs. Castlemaine's harsh judgment of Lord Maundrell; and do not you suppose for one

moment that my father would be the one to condemn me to misery? He loves me too well!"

"I will say no more; only I shall pray day and night that this union may never take place. You have been as a sister to me, and I cannot think calmly of—of this thing." And afraid to say more, perhaps unable, she hurried away, leaving Gabrielle to her bitter thoughts.

In those first few days following her engagement she dexterously avoided Maundrell, and bore patiently with Mrs. Castlemaine's undisguised displeasure, the contempt of Frances and Estelle, the loving entreaties Nora urged her with.

But the thought of the future was very bitter to her, and her feeling towards Maundrell remained one of repulsion; and, despite her endeavour to avoid him, Barry came upon her one morning in the conservatory.

She was alone, and the white dress she wore was hardly whiter than her young face; but she flushed hotly when Barry spoke her name, and confronted him with terrified eyes and quivering lips.

"Miss Smith, I want to speak to you. Is this true that people are saying? Are you serious in your intention to marry Maundrell?"

She bowed her head. She simply could not speak for the mad beating of her heart; and she kept her eyes resolutely bent upon the ground.

"I am most sorry," went on the deep, grave voice, "most sorry, for your sake and for my own too. You had taught me to believe you good and womanly. Now I find you are ready to give yourself to any profligate who boasts a title!"

She made a gesture as though he hurt her; but he went on ruthlessly,—

"I do not know if you understand to what manner of man you are giving yourself. I can only hope you do not. He is a profligate, a gambler, an utterly vicious and despicable character! More than one ruined life lies at his door!"

"Hush!" she cried, in an awful voice, "do not tell me these things now—it is too late! I have promised to marry him, and I must. It may be, too, that you misjudge him, that you have listened to lying slanders."

"It is all as true as gospel. Let him deny it, if he can. Miss Smith, am I presuming too far when I ask if you love him? And if not, why will you marry him?"

"I do not love him, but in time I shall. Oh! I hope so, I pray so! Surely I must, when he will be so good to me always. And it is my father's wish. He is so happy to think I shall be safe in a husband's care, so glad to know that when he dies I shall not be alone, that I could not break my word if I would."

"Was there no other man who could fill such a place better than Maundrell?"

"Let me go!" she said, under her breath. "I—I am not well," and as she lifted her eyes to his he read her secret, and all his heart yearned towards her.

"Gabrielle!" he cried, and then, remembering his promise, was silent, whilst she covered before him, covering her face with her hands. When he spoke again his voice was stern with his efforts at self-repression.

"You may believe, Gabrielle, I have a very real and earnest interest in your welfare, that I should be glad to see your happiness secure; but I tell you if you marry Maundrell you will wreck your whole life. He is utterly without principle, unstable, and violent! Nothing but misery can result from union with such a man! Think over what I say, and be true to your-

self, for therein lies your safety!" and with those words he left her.

And when she had wept a little, and in that wise won some measure of calmness, she dressed herself and hurried towards her father's home.

He looked up as she entered his office, and the expression on her face frightened him. He started up with outstretched arm.

"My child! my child! What is it?"

Clinging about him she entreated, wildly,—

"Father, father, tell me the truth? Is—Is Lord Maundrell so very bad a man? Are you giving me shame and pain in lieu of happiness and honour? You would not so wrong me, dear—me, your only child? Oh! it must be false, father—my father!"

"It is false!" he answered, boldly.

"Maundrell has been much maligned. In his extreme youth he was a little wild, and Buckley is such a Puritanical place that every error is exaggerated into a vice."

"But—but Mr. Castlemaine spoke of ruined lives—ruined by him!"

"Castlemaine is a fool and a prig! Gabrielle, has he spoken of love to you?"

"No, oh, no! I do not think he likes me," she answered, flushing painfully.

"I am glad of that; and, my girl, you should allow no one to come between you and your lover. Don't you think in time you will grow to care for Fred?" wistfully.

"You are sure, quite sure, dear, that you are not deceiving me? Oh! I do not mean to hurt you, but I remember that when once I am married to Lord Maundrell I shall have no power of appeal against him."

"He will be good to you, and you may safely let me be your guide in this matter. Come, Gabrielle, dry your tears, and promise to behave prettily towards your lover. Let me tell you, my girl, you are very lucky! Half the women in Buckley would be glad to stand in your shoes, and most of the idle tales you hear emanate from their disappointment and jealousy."

"I will try to like him better, to be a loyal wife," she said, with a sigh; "but love will not be forced. And now, dear, I must say good-bye. I am going out with Nora, and do not wish to keep her waiting," so she kissed him, and went out; and he stood, thoughtful and frowning, wondering if, indeed, he was doing well in giving his innocent child to such a man as Maundrell.

Of those three months that followed her engagement what can be said? For Barry they were full of anguish and bitter regret. Why had he been so proud of his name and family, so blind to the beauty of her character?

Why had he hesitated so long that another man had stepped in and won the treasure he coveted? Now it would be worse than useless to speak.

The tide of his luck had turned, and before the wedding day dawned he was free of debt, and, consequently, when "Iniquity" Smith begged Gabrielle might be married from his house, able to answer in a decided negative.

Smith was furious, especially as none of the Castlemaine girls were to be bridesmaids; but the widow of a needy knight stepped forward and placed her residence at his service, so that the preparations went on rapidly.

And now came the day when Gabrielle was to leave the home she had found fair and sweet, and Mrs. Castlemaine had presented her with a handsome pearl necklace; the girls added their several gifts, and hoped she would be happy, in tones which plainly said they thought she would not.

Barry had given her nothing, and until an hour before her departure was invisible. She had gone down to the library for a book she had forgotten to pack with her

belongings, and was standing, looking sadly round at all the dear familiar objects; and as her eyes rested on his vacant chair tears rose to them.

She made one forward step as though she would embrace that insensate thing, when she heard a quick tread, and a voice that said, uncertainly, "Miss Smith." And, turning, she confronted Barry.

"So you are leaving us, really?" he said, possessing himself of her hands.

"Yes; and I would like to tell you before I go how happy I have been here, how much I value and appreciate the kindness which gave me a home, and taught me so much that I was ignorant of; but words are so poor to express all that my heart feels, and will ever feel towards you!" and she tried gently to free her hands, but he held them fast.

Her pale cheeks were tear-stained now, her beautiful eyes all dim with the anguish of parting, the fear of the future which lay before her.

His heart ached for her, this young, unhappy child, whose way to him seemed so dark.

"Don't cry, Gabrielle! I cannot bear to see your tears. I wanted to find you alone, and have succeeded after some scheming. I have something to say to you before you go. I want you so long as I live to think of me as your true and earnest friend, to remember I am always ready to help you in any emergency that may arise. Will you do this? I have brought you no gift. My heart is against this marriage, and I will not in any way lend my countenance to it. And now, promise me to remember my words, and then we will say good-bye. I—I—oh, Heaven! What a fool I have been! Gabrielle! Gabrielle! this is worse than death!"

Then all in a flash she knew he loved her, and, alas! that knowledge brought only bitterest agony and regret.

She shrank back, and, he still holding her hands, they stood thus looking miserably into each other's eyes.

"Did you not guess?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper. "Did I hide it so well? Did you never think I loved you more than life itself?"

"Oh, hush! hush! You must not say these things to me now—now, when I am all but his wife. Oh, how unhappy we are! Barry, let me go; for pity's sake do not hold me! I cannot, cannot bear to suffer more!"

"Gabrielle, it is not too late! There is yet time to draw back. Listen to me!"

"No, no! I must not, I dare not! It would almost break my father's heart, and I have gone too far to withdraw. So let us say good-bye now, and for your goodness to me I thank you! I bless you with all my aching heart! For the honour you have done me—me, so unworthy, so undeserving—I offer you my deep gratitude; and I pray, and I shall pray daily, that you may forget me, and be happy with some one more fitted to be your wife. Good-bye—Barry—good-bye!" and, sobbing, she snatched her hands from him; but he was quicker than she, and stopped her egress.

"Kiss me—but once," he pleaded. "It can be no wrong to him, and it would comfort me."

"No," she answered, faintly; "I am afraid of myself. I know my own weakness. Let me leave you now, whilst I have strength to be true to my word and him."

In utter silence he allowed her to pass, in utter silence he watched the lithe, young form until it disappeared up the staircase; then, sinking into a chair, he flung out his arms before him, and hiding his face on them, groaned aloud in the anguish of his soul.

The next morning the sacrifice was

brought to the altar. The pale, young bride was calm and dry-eyed, and uttered the responses in a steady voice; and not one of that brilliant throng guessed that the young heart was all but broken, that not one hope was left to cheer her on her dreary way.

Continued on page 545 of this number.

ARE YOU ABOUT TO MARRY?

There has just been published by F. W. Sears, Osborne Chambers, Ludgate Hill, London, an invaluable book on the most important of all subjects to young people—*Marriage*.

During those delightful days that precede the actual "fixing the date," no time is found to think over or discuss the very important preliminary arrangements that must be attended to if the wedding ceremony is to go off with that éclat so much desired by all young couples. Thrown thus upon themselves and eager for advice, they are debtors to all who can in any way render them assistance at so anxious a moment. This little book will indeed prove a "friend in need," not only to the bride and bridegroom, but to all who may have any duty to perform, however small, at a wedding. In fact, the best man's and head bridesmaid's duties are tabulated on a separate page, which can be easily detached from the book and referred to at church, if necessary. Space will not permit us to refer to each chapter separately, suffice it to say that no detail is overlooked, and the prospective Benedict may approach the altar, that consummation of all his dreams and hopes, with a light heart and a quiet mind, if this book has been previously studied.

The first chapter is taken up in discussing the most appropriate day and time for fixing the ceremony, the point as to banns or license; and a word or two is added on Barriers to Matrimony. Following on this "Social Preliminaries" are considered, and it is here that the Bride and her family have their opportunity. Full information is given regarding invitations, presents, wedding dress, bridesmaids, floral decorations, and most important of all the ring. There are also chapters on "The Ceremony," "The Reception," "The Honeymoon," and "The Returning Home."

A most useful part of the book is that devoted to "Home Hints," by Mrs. Talbot Coke. Here we find discussed the selection of the house, furnishing, and the general arrangement of the new home.

Dean Farrer contributes a very helpful preface, worthy of careful consideration by all approaching the married state.

MARRIAGE, WEDDINGS, THE HOME, will be sent post free by the Publisher, F. W. Sears, 7, Osborne Chambers, Ludgate Hill, London, for one shilling and sixpence.

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ENTITLED

UNSEEN FIRES

BY EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Further Particulars next week

TWICE CHOSEN.

CHAPTER XVI.

SEEN THROUGH A LEAFY SCREEN.

MENTONE proved all which Adela and her friends could desire.

The damp and fog-born coughs soon ceased, bronchitis was laid aside, roses bloomed upon the girl's cheeks, and the hue of health was seen upon those of Sir Richard; while Horace, between happiness, and change, and rest, looked more "fit" than he had ever done before.

Sir Richard was beginning to like his society, and to seek it, and although he was not willing to acknowledge it, even to himself, he no longer felt any regret at his daughter's choice.

Almost every day the old Baronet might be seen leaning upon the young man's arm, with a bright and interested face; listening to his news, and his amusing conversation.

Some materials strike sparks out of the duller metals.

It was so with Horace.

He had always something to say, and whatever the theme he managed it so as to make it worth talking about; and Adela and Lilian looked on well content.

Among the English people at Mentone that season were Lord Lynestone and his young wife and little son; and Cecil Egerton, at the earnest request of the former, went thither to confer with him about the boy's future.

Lord Lynestone was sinking slowly. He had no especial disease to which medical science could be of avail. It was with him a general decadence, a failing of nature.

He was considerably above the age of man, and knew that he could expect nothing else; and he was prepared for the end. Nay, he would have welcomed it, weary with the journey of life, but for the sake of the two he must leave unshielded in the world. Still he trusted to his nephew to stand by them and aid them when he should have paid nature's last debt.

He felt that his marriage had been very hard upon Cecil, and he now meant to leave him such a fortune as would render him independent of the service, whenever he desired to leave it, after his many years of soldiering.

It seemed as though the old Earl could not die until he had commended his wife and child to his care.

Lord Lynestone's had been a somewhat romantic marriage.

He had for twenty years had a private secretary, who had lived in his house, and attended to all his affairs; one Captain D'Arcy, who passed among them as a single man and was believed to be such by the Earl himself, until the date of the Captain's sudden illness and unexpected death.

Then he sent for his patron, and, in great distress of mind, told him a sad history.

Captain D'Arcy had married in his youth a lady of good family and expectations, but the marriage had been a clandestine one.

Had it proved happy, the young man would have soon acknowledged it to the world, but the tempers of the two were unsuited, and they speedily agreed mutually each to go their own way, and leave the other untrammelled; he plunged into a vortex of dissipation, which soon obliged him to leave his regiment, and she to return to live in her father's house of ease and luxury, which she bitterly regretted having ever left.

Once only had he seen her after that, when their little girl was born.

Then she had sent for him to see the child and he had gone.

He found her in a London lodging, she

being supposed to be abroad with some friends, who knowing of her secret marriage, were willing to keep her counsel.

He called again at a later date and found both mother and child gone, and the former had left no address. He applied at the post-office, but none had been lodged there either, and he returned to his club in a state of disgust, determining to trouble himself no more about a woman who cared so little for him.

Neither she nor the child could want, he knew, for although she would not be able to take her little one home to her father's, without acknowledging her marriage, her pin-money alone amounted to a large sum, out of which she could well afford to pay for the keep of her infant.

Shortly after, through an influential friend; Captain D'Arcy obtained the position in Lord Lynestone's household, which he retained until his death.

During his last hours the past troubled him, and he charged Lord Lynestone to let his wife know of his decease, receiving from him a promise to see both her and his daughter.

His Lordship therefore went straight to her father's mansion in Bankshire, there to learn a sad story.

He had been ruined ten years before, by a bank failure, and the family had split up, each to earn their own living as best they could.

He had considerable difficulty in finding Mrs. D'Arcy, but he had made a promise to a man now dead, and he was determined to fulfil it, if possible.

When he did find her it was in a state of almost poverty; her daughter was with her, her constant nurse and companion.

Mrs. D'Arcy had been no mean artist as an amateur, and she had supported herself and her child at first with but small difficulty.

But the long hours of labour, the loss of brightness in her life, the poorer fare, the confinement, soon told upon her health.

She was too proud to apply to her husband to help her, by whom she had not stood in her younger days, nor had she his address, save that of the club to which she had directed in days gone by.

She did not know of his long residence at Lynestone, as the Earl's secretary.

She and Rosamond occupied two small rooms in a pretty cottage at Richmond, and the girl now went to London with her mother's paintings, which grew fewer and fewer as her strength gradually diminished.

When Lord Lynestone arrived at Jasmine Cottage he was over fatigued, and his sad revelation made, the invalid had to bestir herself to wait upon him, for Rosamond was out.

When the girl returned, she thought the old man so ill that she went for a doctor, who said he must be put to bed at once, and carefully watched, for he was threatened with apoplexy.

Here was a terrible position for the D'Arcys. Rosamond carried their trouble to their kind landlady, who offered to give up her own airy bedroom to his lordship, and to help the girl to wait upon him; and there Lord Lynestone had to remain for a week, his household in a state of dismay at his unusual absence.

No apoplexy intervened; it was staved off by the doctor's careful treatment, and the old man went home.

But he could not forget Mrs. D'Arcy and her beautiful young daughter, and before a month had elapsed, he wrote a formal proposal for fair Rosamond's hand, at the same time offering her mother a home at Lynestone. He had taken a fancy to the bright-faced girl, and thought this would be the best way to help them.

His offer was at once gladly accepted.

Love was a sealed book to Rosamond D'Arcy. She had had to toil early and late, and it seemed to her that a life of ease and pleasure would be Paradise.

The price she had to pay for it appeared nothing until her wedding-day; then her heart spoke—her womanhood cried out. She shrank from the future before her, and burning tears ran down her pale cheeks, for she knew that she was selling herself for this world's goods—knew that she had no love for the old man whom she must henceforth call husband.

But she drove back these natural feelings, and became Lady Lynestone, and she and her mother settled down in comfort in the beautiful home which was to have been Cecil Egerton's.

There was to be no more toil now, no more drudgery, no more poverty, but the change had come too late for Mrs. D'Arcy. She lived to see Lord and Lady Lynestone's little boy, and then faded away, being united to the husband in death, with whom she had elected not to remain in life.

Rosamond had made the old man a good and patient wife and nurse.

He was too infirm to take her out into the world, as she had hoped and dreamed, and well it was for her that such was the case.

With her dazzling beauty and youth, it was scarcely likely that her warm young heart would not have claimed some other kindred one for its own; and in a mind like hers the struggle between love and duty would have been a fearful ordeal for the young wife to pass through.

In her quiet and beautiful home, with her bonnie boy to interest and amuse her, she was at peace and content; not pining for pleasures which she had never known. And there she remained for three more years, when the doctors ordered his lordship to a warmer climate.

They travelled from place to place, but even the air of Italy and Switzerland cannot rejuvenate, and the man of medicine knew that the beginning of the end had begun.

Lord Lynestone wished to die in his ancestral halls, but the homeward journey was pronounced to be too much for him; but his desire grew even more urgent, and it was decided that his removal should be attempted as soon as his nephew arrived, and he reached Mentone upon the same day as Sir Richard Freemantle and his party; whereas Lord Carruthers, who had travelled more quickly, had been already a couple of days on the spot, and had been devoting his time to making various arrangements for the comfort and pleasure of his friends from Marsden Hall.

Among other things he determined to procure some flowers to get placed in Adela's and Lillian's rooms, which he felt he could easily manage through the servants.

When at the florist's, he was strangely struck at the beauty of a lady who was choosing the fairest blossoms she could obtain, which he heard her say were for an invalid.

When she went away he inquired who the beautiful girl was, and learnt that this was Lord Lynestone's young wife, so soon, as all the world knew, to become a widow; and a great pity for her filled his mind. He seemed obliged to think of her, compelled to it by the force of her great beauty.

And he found himself asking, again and again, whether by any possibility this fair creature could love the infirm old man with whom she was mated? and his own heart answered "No," emphatically.

Lord Carruthers' flowers were duly admired by Adela and Lillian upon their arrival, but one was as innocent as the

other as to whose kindness they were indebted for them.

They found by the local paper, in the visitors' list, that he had arrived before them, and he left his card upon the first evening, with his address, and made inquiries for them after their journey; but delicacy prevented his breaking in upon their privacy so soon.

When Cecil Egerton reached the beautiful villa in which his uncle had taken up his abode, he saw at once the desire to go home had come upon him too late. He had a long and earnest talk with the dying man, who retained his faculties clear to the end.

He heard from his own lips the whole history of his marriage, and understood the significance of the fact that the young widow, countess though she was, had scarcely a friend in the world; and his uncle pointed out to Cecil what a prize she would be, with her beauty and wealth, and how many adventurers would be about her path, to whom she might fall an easy prey, from her innocence and ignorance of the ways of the world.

And Cecil promised to do the best he could to shield and protect her; also undertaking the guardianship of the little lordling, and Lord Lynestone lay very quiet with his feeble hand in the strong one of his nephew.

"Rosamond," he said, as she entered the room. "It is too late!"

"What is too late, dear?" she asked, sorrowfully, kneeling by his side, and looking tenderly into his drawn face.

"Too late to return home. But you will bury me there, Cecil? My bones would not rest in a strange place."

"I will respect your wishes in all ways, my dear uncle," he replied kindly.

"Rosamond," continued Lord Lynestone, "when I am gone you must look to Cecil for advice and guidance. If you are in any difficulty, my child, appeal to him. He will help you, for my sake!"

"I shall not forget," she answered softly.

"She has been a gentle wife, Cecil; and remember, I am not selfish enough to wish her to spend her life alone. She is young, and will, I hope, some day marry suitably. But, Rosamond, if you have any doubt as to the fitness of your choice, consult Cecil, and recollect that he was your husband's only relation."

Tears filled the sweet blue eyes, and words rose to her lips, springing from a tender heart.

She was trying to tell her dying lord that no other should take his place, but he stopped her.

"Hush! my darling! I will listen to no such promises. I will not permit you to make them. Who knows what the future may hold for you? Remember I wish you to be happy! Now, kiss me, child, and let me sleep."

She obeyed him, and she and Cecil sat there watching, listening to the laboured breathing. He called Cecil on one side, and told him he would probably pass away in his sleep, and he was right.

Cecil went to the young widow's side, and taking her hand, tried to lead her from the room.

"Let me stay," she pleaded. "I cannot leave him!"

"My dear," he answered, gently. "The end was indeed, peaceful. He has left you!"

"No, no," she answered, in an awed voice. "He cannot be dead!"

She leant over him.

He breathed no more.

Then she stooped and kissed him, weeping the while, and let Cecil take her from the chamber.

* * * * *

That evening Cecil went out upon various matters in connection with his uncle's death, and to make arrangements for the conveyance of his body to England; and as he stood within one of the shops, he heard a voice which made his heart stand still, and saw a tall slight figure pass in company with another girl.

Sir Richard and Horace were in front of them, but he did not perceive them. His whole attention was taken up by Adela and Lillian, both of whom he recognized.

The former was looking bright and happy, as well as the latter, for they were expressing their satisfaction at the good terms which had begun to exist between Sir Richard and Horace.

Had Adela turned round, she would have seen her lover watching her. As it was, the carriage was awaiting them at the end of the next street, and as soon as they reached the corner they got in and drove off. So when Cecil made up his mind to follow them, they were no longer visible, nor could he understand what had become of them.

Suddenly he looked up, and saw the publishing shop, where the list of visitors was printed; but upon application for one he found it would not be out till the following morning.

But the transfer of a heavy coin from Cecil's pocket to that of the salesman, brought the offer of the names and addresses of any of the new arrivals he might wish to know about, and he left the office with the information that Miss Thornadyke was staying at Greenholme with Sir Richard Freemantle and his family; and that night Adela's *espégle* face chased away the sweet, sad one of Lady Lynestone, and even that of the dead Earl himself, and by morning Cecil had made up his mind to call and see Adela—see for himself whether he was forgotten, or if the light of love would ever again shine from her beautiful eyes for him.

He had been wildly, madly jealous. Reason was crushed out of his mind by the stronger feeling.

Every mail he had expected to hear that the woman he loved was betrothed to another, and that other was Lord Carruthers; but no such news reached him.

The last he had heard of her was that she had gone to Marsden Hall to help Lillian nurse her father, so he was not greatly surprised to find her, even at Mentone, in their company.

He still loved her with every pulse of his exacting heart. She was just as needful to his happiness as ever.

If he could once see her, he should soon know whether she had shut him from her love.

One moment he told himself it was no wonder if she had done so, for she was a proud girl, and he had left her with scarce a word.

The next he fiercely repeated that there was no other course open to him, as he had assured himself at Winsthorpe, and over and over again since that sad day when her self-will and his mistrust had wrecked their joint happiness.

Sleep would not come to him. Restlessly he paced his chamber, impatient for the morning, that he might present himself at Greenholme; and before noon he stood with his hand upon the latch of the gate, with a wildly-beating heart.

The path up to the house by which he entered the grounds was not the carriage drive, but wound among beautiful shrubs and ferns, being almost at times hidden from view.

As he followed it, going towards the house, Adela's voice came to him, and he stopped with a sudden longing to see her unseen, and peered through the leafy screen,

She was sitting under the verandah, and advancing in her direction across the lawn, was a tall, fair young man.

Cecil Egerton's heart stood still. The blood then surged with a mad rush through his veins.

He clenched his powerful right hand, and dug his heel savagely into the gravel path.

"Dela," said the fair man, "which will you have—red or white?"

"Oh, white for me!" she answered, with a bright smile, looking up at him.

"Roses red and roses white,
As if pale with love's despair,
As if pale with love's despair,"

he sang, as he handed it to her.

"A great deal you know of love's despair, you old rascal!" she laughed.

"I should have known it, Scamp, but for you," he returned, earnestly. "You have been my good angel."

"A wingless one, I fear," she retorted.

"And now see—I have no pin."

"But I have. You perceive that I'm not an engaged man for nothing; every lover should be made to carry pins for his lady's needs. Here you are, Dela, or better still, let me put it on for you. I'm getting quite an expert at that sort of thing already."

Adela rose from her chair, and willingly allowed Horace to pin on the roses he had given her.

There was no reserve, no shyness between these two; there was not the least consciousness, nor the faintest fear of their misunderstanding each other.

But Major Egerton misunderstood them. The old jealousy was raging in his breast.

"That man again—curse him!" he muttered, through his clenched teeth.

"Let her have him—he is a better match than I shall ever be!" he added, bitterly, "and she knows it," and he turned away with uneven steps, going out again by the gate he had entered with so light a heart, heavy enough now—heavy as lead.

It was agony to him to see her accept love gifts from another, to watch him pin them upon her shoulder with a lover's freedom, to hear him say she had saved him from despair, to listen to his opinion as to his own improvement as her lady's-maid, since his engagement to her.

Every word entered his very soul, and quivered there like a barbed and poisoned arrow.

He had told himself from month to month that it was all over between them, but never with such dead certainty as now.

She was engaged to another. Horace's own words had been the funeral-knell of all his hopes.

He looked ten years older when he once more entered the villa of his dead uncle. Lady Lynestone gazed at him in wonder, questioned him as to whether he was ill; but Cecil was not the man to appreciate the prettiest woman's sympathy, if she were not the one woman in the world for him.

So he forced himself to talk to her of the funeral arrangements, earnestly persuading her to remain at Mentone with her boy, while he went to England with his sad charge, and saw his uncle laid to rest with his ancestors.

"If you say it is right, Cecil, it must be so," she answered, "for my dear lord bade me trust you."

So Cecil asked a few people whom he knew to be kind to the gentle young widow until his return, and set out on his melancholy journey.

His path and Adela's had again met and diverged, and she little guessed how near she had been to having her lover at her feet once more.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I COULD NOT GIVE YOU LOVE FOR LOVE."

As Cecil Egerton listlessly ran his eye over the list of visitors at Mentone, he was not in the least surprised to see the name of Lord Carruthers among them, and he crushed the paper with an impatient hand, and flung it aside.

At one moment he decided to go to Winthorpe, and upbraid his old friend the Rector for not letting him know the truth about Adela.

The next he saw the absurdity of such a step.

He had never, by word or look, taken Mr. Thorndyke into his confidence, and how could he expect it in return from him, or sympathy either?

On the contrary, the Rector would be rejoicing in the engagement, which, to him, meant lifelong loneliness; for well he knew that Adela's place in his heart could never be taken by another.

Perhaps his old friend had even laid pressure upon his child, to persuade her to accept this good match, which he had himself so ardently desired.

Not that Adela could have needed much persuasion, he thought bitterly. She had seemed perfectly at home with the handsome young fellow who was familiarly fastening roses upon her dress.

Well! there was little wonder. He was in youth's pride and prime: he was rich, and affluent; while he, Cecil Egerton, was but a soldier of fortune, a major in a marching regiment, with his best years already passed.

The train whirled him along through France, his mind excited and sad.

Would Adela have married him if he had now been Lord Lynestone?

He asked himself the question again and again, one moment, loyal in his rejection of the thought that riches or station would have altered her conduct one jot or tittle; the next, recklessly believing this, or any other evil of her.

England was reached at last.

It was not two years since he had visited Lynestone—his uncle's guest.

Now, he was accompanying all that remained on earth of the Earl back to the home he had loved.

He had lived honoured and respected, and had died at a good old age, respected still, and leaving a wife to mourn his loss—at any rate for a little space—and a hostage to fortune in the shape of his merry, blue-eyed boy—now Lord Lynestone.

And Cecil, his acknowledged heir for so many years, was not to reign in the old place in his stead.

There was a large gathering to pay the last tribute to the dead man.

No plumes or black draperies were to be seen at the Earl's funeral. No black hearse, or mourning coaches.

But there was a procession of well-appointed, private carriages following the entafalque, which reached from the mansion to the chapel in the park, which, although in reality a private one, was thrown open on Sundays for the people of Lynestone to worship in.

There the family vault was.

In the middle of the chancel stood a rarely beautiful monument, upon which the gold-hued glass windows threw a seeming glory.

Four angels carved in white marble were guarding it, one at either corner, and the names of the Lynestones, from the days of the Saxon kings, were graven upon it.

Facing the altar was a door by which descent was made to the spacious vault below, in which those of this ancient family rested, who had died at home in peace, while the bones of many had bleached upon

battle-fields, and some had known only a watery grave.

Among his ancestors they laid the departed Earl, his coffin laden with white blossoms and turned each man to his own home, save those who were invited to be present at the reading of the will.

There were the usual legacies to old family retainers, and instructions as to various favourite horses.

Cecil Egerton was to receive twenty thousand pounds, as a mark of his uncle's affection, and was appointed his boy's sole guardian from the age of twelve to eighteen, when he was to be permitted to judge for himself of his future; but was recommended still to act under his guardian's advice.

To Rosamond, his Countess, the Earl left the sum of fifty thousand pounds absolutely; which she was to retain in the event of her marrying again.

She was to live at Lynestone, if she desired it, should she remain a widow until her son married, upon which event taking place, she was to inhabit the Dower House upon the borderland of the Park.

The rents, &c., were to be allowed to accumulate as much as possible during the young Earl's minority, and the Countess was lovingly entreated to confer with Cecil Egerton, the Earl's loved and respected nephew, upon all matters of importance.

All that he could leave to his wife and to Cecil he had done. The rest was entailed property.

When all had been arranged at Lynestone, Major Egerton hesitated.

Should he fulfil his half-made promise to go to Winthorpe or not? and he decided in the negative.

He felt he could not bear to hear his old friends there speak of the coming wedding of the girl he loved so dearly.

So a few lines informed Mr. Thorndyke that press of business would prevent his paying them his talk-ed of visit, as he must return to mentone to arrange matters for his young widowed aunt; but he purposely omitted to mention his address there, as he did not wish the Rector to write to him.

The consequence was he immediately penned a line to Adela, and told her that Cecil Egerton would be in Mentone again almost as soon as his letter could reach her.

Knowing nothing of his last fatal mistake, the girl let hope once more grow in her heart.

If he should return, and ask her again for an explanation of what he had been unable to understand, or she then to tell him, how gladly would she reveal what had at that time been her friend's secret.

Now, Cecil and all the world might know who her fair and handsome gentleman visitor had been, and why she had met him as she had done.

The love-letter would be explained; the bogie of Lord Carruthers being her lover, would be blown to the four winds, and she?

Might not she be Cecil Egerton's once more? Would he not ask her again to be his wife? Would he not open his arms for her to nestle upon his breast? and should she not hear his heart beat true to her?

She was alone in her chamber thinking, and she held out her hands with a glad cry, as though he were there to clasp them.

She felt that he was coming, that he was not a great way off! If once they met, all would be explained.

She never even asked herself whether he loved her still. It never struck her to doubt his loyalty she believed him to be as incapable of changing as herself.

A misunderstanding had parted them, not want of love.

She had almost forgotten his lack of trust, in her visions of a reconciliation. She was restless and changeable in her moods. Even Horace and Lillian could not make her out. Gay as a skylark one moment, the next wrapped in thoughtful reflection, singing a snatch of a song, playing some bars of a piece, and suddenly stopping: her book lying idle upon her lap or read by jerks. She seemed always to be listening; listening for Cecil.

But days passed slowly by, and he never came.

Sir Richard was once more himself again, and he and Adela took daily walks together, while Horace and Lillian wandered in the country, side by side, avoiding the haunts of men; too happy in each other's company to desire further companionship. Sir Richard on the contrary, liked to look about, and see the people and the shops, so he and Adela went often to the more frequented parts.

About a week after she had heard from her father that Cecil was at Mentone she saw him and he saw her.

He was in Lady Lynstone's open carriage, sitting by her side, with the little lord upon his knee.

His eyes met hers coldly, and he merely raised his hat as the carriage dashed past with its fast-stepping ways.

"Who is that, my dear?" queried the Baronet, looking after the retreating vehicle.

For the moment she was speechless, all the blood seemed to have congealed in her veins. She had seen her lover again. Her soul had gone out to him, and he had passed her with cold courtesy.

She heard her old friend's question in a dazed way. Then she knew that he had repeated it. The earth seemed to have retreated beneath her feet.

She felt faint and ill, but she aroused herself with an effort.

Her strong will once more asserted itself, and she answered, in a firm voice,—
"Major Egerton; you know he is an old friend of papa's."

"To be sure, though I have never seen him before, but he recognised you, my dear, and he will be certain to look you up. When he comes, Adela, make him understand that your father's friends are mine, and that he will be welcome at my house. He must come and dine with us."

"You are very kind," she answered simply, for she knew not what to say.

Her vision had been blown away by one glance from Cecil's cold eyes.

There was not even surprise in them. She saw that he knew perfectly that she was in the place, and he had laid down his line of conduct towards her beforehand.

He knew that she was there, and he had not sought her.

"And who was the lady, my dear?" continued the Baronet. "She was a very pretty woman, and young to be a widow."

"Yes, she was really beautiful," said Adela, freely. "I think she must be Lady Lynstone, his uncle's widow. You will remember that when Lord Carruthers dined with us a day or two ago he was speaking of her as one of the sweetest-looking women he had ever seen."

"Ah! I recollect now, and she deserved his praise. Widows are fascinating little creatures, and Carruthers had better take care of his heart," and Sir Richard looked searchingly in her face.

"It is early days to be finding her a new husband," she said, somewhat reproachfully, "even though hers was believed to be only a *mariage de convenance*; but if she is as sweet as she looks, when a right time has elapsed, Lord

Carruthers might do far worse than become her second husband."

"And would none of his fair friends grieve at his desertion?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Who can tell? One thing I do know, I should not be one of them."

He remained in thought, then spoke suddenly,—

"A *mariage de convenance* was it? Yes, yes, I suppose so. There must be some strong motive to induce summer to waste its bright days upon winter. It was not likely she loved him; was it, Adela?"

"You have asked me a question I cannot answer; I never saw the late earl."

"But, generally speaking, such love would not be likely, or possible."

"Not likely, but certainly possible."

"You think so, my dear?" he said, looking at her with interest.

"It would not be like the love of two young hearts, perhaps; but I think a girl might be very fond of an old man, if he were what he ought to be, ripened in goodness with his years."

"There are not many such, my child. Ah! here comes Carruthers."

Then he turned to his Lordship.

"We have just seen your widow," he laughed, "and a lovely little woman she is; but there was a good-looking fellow already in possession."

"Indeed, so soon? Who may I ask?"

"Major Egerton; he's a friend of Miss Thorndyke's."

"Egerton! Why, she's his aunt!"

"His aunt! she does not look like it."

"I should have said his uncle's widow."

His marriage must have been a great disappointment to Major Egerton, for he didn't marry till he was seventy-five or six."

"Ten years my senior!" cried Sir Richard, "and married to a pretty young girl. Well! there is a chance for me yet—oh, Carruthers."

"I shouldn't like you for a rival if you entered the lists with me," laughed Lord Carruthers; and then he added, mischievously, "Perhaps Lady Lynstone would like another matured man, Sir Richard. Who knows?"

"Who, indeed!" chuckled the Baronet, "but to tell the truth I looked upon you as her admirer, and was saying so to Miss Thorndyke as you came along."

Lord Carruthers coloured.

Although he had been thinking a good deal of the widow and her beauty, his affections were still Adela's, and it was far from pleasant for him to have such a suggestion made to her; and he longed for an opportunity to convince her that Lady Lynstone was nothing to him.

"You are very thoughtful, Sir Richard," he said, in a nettled voice, "but rather precipitate, as I have not even yet been introduced to the lady in question."

The Baronet laughed.

He knew exactly what his Lordship felt. He had, in fact, laid the trap for him, for he had not yet quite put aside his idea of making Adela happy.

Lord Carruthers accompanied them home, and was invited by the Baronet to remain to dinner, so he sauntered to his hotel and dressed, and returned in plenty of time for that meal.

It was a beautiful evening, and the stars were shining overhead as bright as diamonds in the sky; and all but Sir Richard were tempted out into the garden.

"Go out, my dear," he said kindly to Adela. "I have not seen you look so pale since you left England. You are as white as the privet flower."

"If I am as hardy I shall not hurt," answered Adela with a sad smile.

"My dear, is anything the matter?" he asked anxiously, looking at her heavy eyes.

"My head aches," she replied. "It is not much to talk about, is it?"

"The air will do it good, Adela; stay as long as you feel inclined. I shall take a nap most likely."

So she joined the other three, and they wandered about the grounds; she and Lord Carruthers in front. Suddenly she stopped, for Horace and Lillian were nowhere to be seen.

His Lordship had no mind to miss the opportunity which had been made for him, either by design or accident, and turned to her, the moonlight falling upon his refined, well-out features.

"Adela," he said, softly, "I was most terribly vexed at what Sir Richard said to me to-day regarding Lady Lynstone."

"Yes, it is a mistake to make such speeches," she replied readily, "especially when they are made in reference to a recent widow. She would naturally be bitterly annoyed if she by chance heard of them; but of one thing you may rest assured, it was said thoughtlessly, and with no intention to give offence."

"All you say is quite right, Miss Thorndyke," he continued; "but you do not seem to understand the chief cause of my annoyance. I shamed to say it was not delicacy for her ladyship's feelings."

"No?" she said interrogatively.

"No; it was the fear you should believe that I could think of, or wish, any other woman for my wife except yourself! Adela," he went on earnestly. "I have loved you now more than three years. No other woman has been sought to me during that time. Your image has filled my heart to overflowing. I have loved you, and I love you still, with a deep and earnest affection. Adela! Adela! my dear girl, have you no kind thought for me? Do you continue indifferent as to my happiness?"

"Lord Carruthers, I am not indifferent to your happiness at all," she answered kindly; "and, indeed, nothing could give me more pleasure than to hear that you were thoroughly content with your life."

"Then, dear one, let me hope that you will give a different answer to my prayer from that I received at Winsthorpe. I cannot be happy without you!"

"You would not be so with me," she answered, sadly.

"Should I not?" he replied, in a low, passionate voice, drawing her to him.

"Adela, give me a trial; see if my deep devotion cannot satisfy you! Oh! my love, you do not dream what you are to me."

"Perhaps not," she answered. "And yet I think I do understand."

"You cannot, or you would not torture me by your coldness!" he cried.

"I am not cold," she said, gently.

"Indeed, I wish to be your friend; so much do I wish to be your friend that I will not shrink from giving myself cruel pain to prove it to you. Lord Carruthers, you will promise that what I say shall be sacred to you?"

"As sacred as my mother's honour," he replied, solemnly.

"I am satisfied," she said, half under her breath. Then she turned and placed her cold hand in his.

"Would you wish a wife to lie in your bosom with a heart wildly longing for another man's love? Would you wish her to evade your kiss, because it is not his? To shrink from your tender words because they do not fall from his lips? To know that every fibre of her nature quivers at his touch, trembles at his footfall? To realise that whatever worship you give her, she loves him more? That all your deep affection can give her no joy, no happiness; her



ADELA'S VOICE CAME TO EGERTON, AND HE STOPPED WITH A SUDDEN LONGING TO SEE HER UNSHEN.

happiness being centred in another? Would such a wife make your comfort, my friend? Would you desire such an one for your life companion?

"Heaven forbid!" he replied earnestly. "Then never again think of me as aught but a friend. I like you truly; my love is beyond your reach!"

"Adela, can this be true?" he queried, in a pained voice, "or are you trying to cure me of my love? Are you building up this barrier to drive me away? Nothing but the knowledge that you belong to another will silence me, rest assured."

"My heart is not mine to give," she said, sadly. "I might almost say 'I wish it were,' for your constancy touches me, and I believe you will be very good to the girl you marry; but I value your peace too much to accept your offer, knowing that I could not give you love for love—could not satisfy your large heart. Dear Lord Carruthers, seek some gentle woman who would make you a loving yielding wife, and companion through life. I could not so wrong you as to take advantage of your devotion!"

"Adela," said his Lordship, with feeling. "You have been very good to me; I know that it has cost you dearly to tell me the truth, for I fear that your choice has not been a happy one!"

"No, it has brought me much sorrow," she confessed, with trembling lips.

"Will you make me one promise, dear?" he asked.

"Yes, I can trust you."

"If ever you overcome this fancy, and feel you are free to love another, and capable of wifely affection, you will let me know."

"Do not think of it; it is not a fancy, it is the love of years."

"Adela, it is impossible that you can love in vain if your lover is worthy of the name of man."

"He is worthy, believe me, I have no need to be ashamed of him," she said warmly, "he is brave and true!"

"Do not ask me to suppose the fault is yours, Adela; I cannot do it."

"Believe that there was no fault at all, that circumstances placed me in a false light!"

"And he could not trust you! My dear, I would have stood by you against all the evidence the combined world could produce. Adela, I would to Heaven your passion for this other were not so great, that I might shelter you from sorrow and care; but, my dear, I could not bear it. Every time I saw a cloud upon your white brow I should feel that you were longing for him, and not for me. My soul would be torn with anguish," he added, brokenly.

"I know it," replied she, tenderly; "it would be so with every true man. My friend, you must live it down!"

"Yes! I must try and live it down; for the present I think I had better go away, and see whether your dear face will haunt me less elsewhere."

"You are quite right, Lord Carruthers, and when it is done, come back. Let the past, with its dead hopes, never be spoken of between us, and let us be fast friends."

"That is a compact," he answered, kindly. "And now, Adela, good-night; I cannot go back among the others. They must have guessed my secret; no doubt they will understand."

"Good-night," she said, softly, "and believe that I am sorry to have given you pain!"

They clasped hands then warmly and

firmly, and the night breeze seemed to take up her words, and to echo his sigh, as he parted from her, and went out into his life alone.

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1969. Back Nos. can be obtained through any Newsagent.)

Who is Phillipa's Father?

Their life-story will be told
next week.

HOW PHILLIPA

SHELTERED HER FATHER

SAVED HER FAMILY

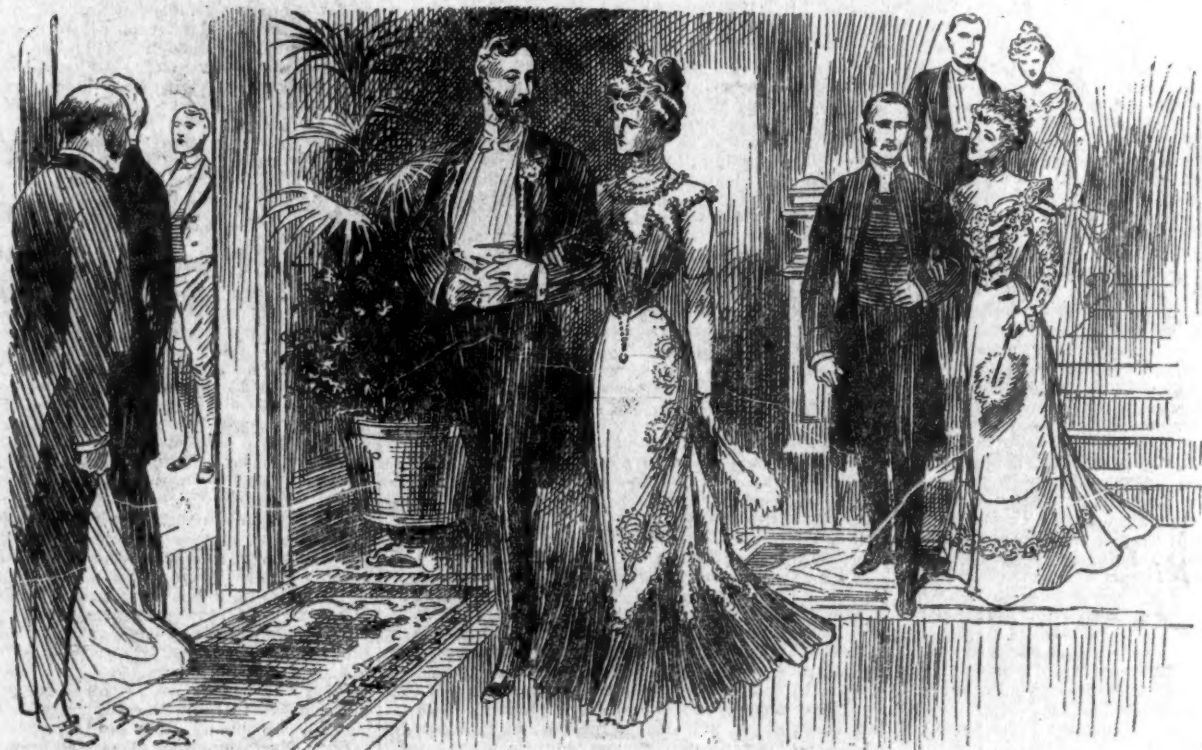
AND SECURED LASTING

HAPPINESS FOR HERSELF



This story complete Next Week

Chapter III. of IVY'S PERIL will contain



"RESEMBLANCES ARE STRANGE THINGS," SAID LADY FORTESCUE, A LITTLE COLDLY, "I NEVER SEE THEM MYSELF."

IVY'S PERIL.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Dora Gresham, the wife of Mr. Gresham, has met her death after a lingering illness that baffled several medical experts. Dr. Ward suspects foul play, but cannot follow the case up owing to his having received an appointment abroad, and which keeps him from England for many years. While attending Mrs. Gresham, Dr. Ward had promised to be a friend to her daughter, should she ever need one. Many years have elapsed, and Ivy Carew (the daughter of Dora Gresham) is now a beautiful young woman residing at Starham with her Guardian, Sir John Fortescue, who is now the owner of Meadow View, the house in which Ivy was born. Ivy has long thought there must be some mystery surrounding her life, but so far her curiosity has not been satisfied. Meadow View is now let to a Mr. White, a millionaire with a past, who is expected to take up his residence within a few days. Meantime Paul Beresford, Mr. White's secretary, has been down to Starham on business, and, to him, a fortunate mishap leads to his making the acquaintance of the Fortescue's, and he reports the circumstance to his chief, who is anxious for information respecting Ivy.

CHAPTER II.

"MR. WHITE and his sister have arrived."

It was Lady Fortescue who made this statement nearly a month after her introduction to Paul Beresford. She and her husband were alone in the drawing-room, for Ivy had gone to bed.

Several times had the millionaire's coming been postponed, but now it had really come to pass. After nineteen years of desertion and gloom Meadow View was once more tenanted.

Sir John looked up quickly. There was a note of sadness in his wife's voice which struck him painfully. His keen eyes saw that hers were not quite dry.

"Lucy, why did you not tell me?" he exclaimed, reproachfully. "Don't you

know I would have let Meadow View stand empty till it went to ruin rather than cause you a pang? Why did you not tell me it would hurt you to see strangers in your sister's home?"

"But it will not; at least, I mean I am very glad the old place should be inhabited; but all this talk of Meadow View seems to have brought back our trouble so vividly."

"I hoped you had got over it."

"I never have—I never can!" cried his wife, with a burst of passionate sobs terrible to witness in one usually so calm and gentle. "John, Nell was like a part of myself, and to think that she should die alone and neglected while I was living in luxury, cuts me to the very heart!"

"She chose her own fate," said the Baronet, a little sententiously.

"She was so young," pleaded her sister, "only nineteen when she left us. Think of all she must have suffered to bring herself to write that sad, last letter! John, I know you blame her, but surely those four years of anxiety would blot out worse mistakes than hers?"

Sir John's brow darkened.

"I should like to have the handling of that villain, Lucy! When I recollect he has got off scot-free I begin to think there can't be such things as law and justice in England."

Lucy shook her head.

"We never knew what he did," she said, simply, "except that he broke his wife's heart, and that is not an offence provided for by the laws."

"It ought not to go unpunished."

"It will not; depend upon it, John, the wretched man is dead."

"Dead! I never thought of that. What could put such an idea into your head?"

"If he had been alive he would have made some attempt before now to get possession of Ivy. Every year I have dreaded this, and now I begin to feel certain my fears were groundless, and that our darling's only foe has gone to his last account."

"Well, I hope he has," said Sir John, vindictively; "but I don't believe it."

"Why not?"

"Because something here," and he thumped the left side of his waistcoat, "seems to tell me he is alive, and that I shall one day meet poor Nell's destroyer face to face. I can tell you, Lucy, he won't find years have softened my memory of her wrongs!"

Lady Fortescue sighed.

There is a shadow in the past of most families, but hardly such a heavy one as rested on theirs.

Lady Fortescue had one twin sister, from whom till their wedding day she had never once been parted.

Both the girls made brilliant matches, but the people would have said Helen's gave most chance of happiness, since her bridegroom was young and handsome, while good Sir John was well nigh twenty years older than his wife.

Charles Carew well-nigh worshipped his young bride, and it was the first fault Leny had ever admitted in her sister that she did not seem to appreciate the affection lavished on her, or to return it.

For one brief year the Carews lived near their relations, then they deserted Meadow View and went abroad, taking their infant child.

Lady Fortescue corresponded with her sister, but complained bitterly of the brevity and unsatisfactoriness of her

A startling development of the story.

letters; then, without one word of warning before they had even heard he was ill, came the news of Charles Carew's death.

The Fortescues would have started at once for Rome to join their sister, but a telegram came declaring the young widow was on her way home; they might expect her any day, almost any hour.

They expected her till heart grew sick with hope deferred; then leaving his wife in Hugh Ainslie's care, Sir John started for Rome, and hastened to the house where his brother-in-law died.

What he heard there he never told even to his wife, but when he got home it was announced in Starham that Mrs. Carew and her little girl would not return to England at present.

Lady Fortescue so manifestly shrank from any questions on the subject that people jumped to the conclusion there must be something desperately wrong. Their curiosity was never gratified.

The years passed, and by degrees all interest in Mrs. Carew well-nigh died out, but one fine winter's day Lady Fortescue and her husband, accompanied by lawyer Grimshaw went up to London, and stayed away a week. They came back in the deepest mourning, and bringing with them a little girl, who in due time was introduced to all their friends as their adopted child, Ivy Carew.

They never told anyone why they had been estranged from their sister, or where she had spent those long, lonely years.

In reply to questions skillfully put to the child herself they found out that the black frock she wore was for "poor mamma," and that she had been at "school," but that was evidently all she knew of her own history.

The neighbourhood gave up the hope of elucidating the mystery, and gradually adopted Ivy as one of themselves as naturally as though there had not been so large a part of her little life unaccounted for. Only the keener-seeing noted these facts, which they declared "spoke volumes." The Fortescues never spoke of Mrs. Carew; all through her childhood they never suffered their niece to pass a night away from her home unless they were with her, and although naturally the most hospitable of people they seemed to shrink from meeting strangers; in fact, from being frank and outspoken as the day they now behaved as those who have a secret to guard from jealous eyes—a secret they feared every stranger was seeking to surprise.

Southlands was the most important estate in the neighbourhood; its owner could not be cut or sent to Coventry; but though people visited Sir John and his wife as usual the pair lost much of their popularity through what was termed their "mysterious conduct."

And it was only now when Ivy was reaching womanhood, and as mistress of Carew, and heiress-presumptive of the Fortescues, became the richest prize in the matrimonial market that society in general forgave them. They said no more of their private opinions.

Sir John did not try to convince his wife to the belief that "he" (even when alone together they never spoke the hated name) "was alive," and Lady Fortescue would not again advance the theory that he was dead.

She was devoted to her husband, and strove instinctively to turn his thoughts in a more hopeful channel.

"In less than two years, John, Ivy will be twenty-one, and we need never fear for her again."

Sir John sighed.

"Two years is a long time, Lucy."

"If we have kept her safe fourteen years

I don't think we need fear two. You are over anxious, John."

"Perhaps the child knows nothing, does she?"

"Nothing at all."

"Ah, well that's one good thing. I've been thinking, Lucy, I should like the house filled with visitors. We might have a party down for the shooting. New Meadow View has a tenant we ought to do something to make things sociable, and it will be better for the child."

"I shall go and call on Mrs. Austin to-morrow, and take Ivy with me."

But when the morrow came some trifling circumstance detained Miss Carew, and Lady Fortescue made her call alone.

Everything spoke of wealth, the liveried servants, the hot-house flowers, the countless nick-nacks in the drawing-room which so beautified it, all told of ample means, and even of cultured taste.

My lady felt relieved. She had been just a little afraid from Mr. Beresford's description the newcomers would be irksome to her, but there was nothing in the whole appearance of the room she would have wished changed, and she began to form a favourable opinion of the people who had come to live in the house where her beautiful sister—poor lost Nell—had come a bride.

She was not kept long waiting; she had no time for sad reflection before the door opened and Mrs. Austin appeared, a lady of middle age, quietly dressed in black silk, a very small lace cap adorning her still abundant hair; her face was plump and comely, her ringed hands white and shapely, nothing of the inconsolable widow about her—just a prosperous, well-to-do matron such as you might meet any day. Her black hair was almost too smooth, and her teeth were so large and white as to suggest they might be hers not by gift, but by purchase.

Lady Fortescue felt intensely relieved. She had heard of Mrs. Austin as a clever, shrewd woman of business, and knowing nothing of such ladies, had been prepared for something eccentric, but her present hostess looked like any other lady on her visiting list; and pleasure at the fact made her greeting warmer than it otherwise might have been.

"I am an early visitor," she said, kindly; "but I was so anxious to welcome you to Meadow View! It is a great pleasure to us to have neighbours after seeing the house empty so long."

Mrs. Austin replied suitably. The ladies sat down, and conversation did not flag. The widow hit the happy medium between reserve and over-communicativeness.

She told her visitor they had come to Meadow View on account of her brother's health. He led such an active life the doctor had ordered him country air.

"Not that he has any real illness," explained the affectionate sister; "but he is harassed to death with business folks in London. He never has an hour to call his own. We hoped in the country a little social relaxation might be of inestimable benefit to him."

Lady Fortescue hoped it might.

"Still, I fear you will find this neighbourhood rather dull, since I have understood you are great travellers."

Mrs. Austin threw up her hands.

"You may well call us travellers—wanderers is more the term we deserve. We have been to America three times; while as to the Continent, we know every country of it as well as we do England. My late husband"—here she touched her wedding ring—"was a Brazilian merchant, and I went half over the world with him; but, far from finding this lovely country

dull, I am quite looking forward to spending a few tranquil months here."

"You have no children, I think?"

"No; and I will not pretend to be sorry for it. I married late in life, and was left a widow within the year. My brother and I have always been inseparable, and when my husband died I was free to devote the rest of my life to him. I am very fond of children, but I should not have felt equal to the responsibility of bringing them up properly. As there is neither land nor title in our family, the having no one to come after us is not the source of grief it might otherwise be."

"Your brother may marry yet," suggested Lady Fortescue, whose own marriage had been so happy. She liked to see other people make the experiment. "Many men take a wife in middle age."

"It is not likely. George lost his heart once; and though it is years ago, he has been faithful to a memory ever since."

Lady Fortescue's opinion of the millionaire rose insensibly. She liked to know he was capable of sentiment.

"I had hoped to bring my niece with me this afternoon, but my husband wanted her to drive him into Starham."

Mrs. Austin's face changed. She looked so interested at this mention of Ivy that one might have thought she knew and loved her.

"I should have been so pleased! I adore young people! Perhaps, though, I may yet have the happiness of meeting Miss Carew before her visit to you is over."

Lady Fortescue laughed.

"Ivy's visit has lasted fourteen years already. She lives with us entirely."

"Ah, an orphan! How sad!"

Lady Fortescue looked on the ground. She never felt at ease when speaking of her niece's parentage.

"Ivy is a very pretty name," remarked the widow, speaking quite carelessly, and yet watching her visitor keenly as she spoke. "I shall always like it for the sake of a little girl I once knew who was called so. Poor child! she had a sad enough history! But she must be grown up now, for I met her in Paris, and it must be years and years since George and I spent a winter in Paris."

Lady Fortescue had grown white to her very lips, but Mrs. Austin did not seem to remark it. She changed the subject with exquisite tact, and when Lady Fortescue rose to go suffered her to depart quite unconscious her agitation had been remarked.

"It really is too absurd!" was poor Lady Fortescue's admonition to herself as she drove home. "Of course Ivy is an uncommon name; still there must be dozens and dozens of Ivys scattered about the world! Why should I jump to the conclusion because Mrs. Austin met one of them years ago in Paris it must have been our darling?"

The call was returned in due form, but both the ladies at Southlands were out. Then came an invitation for the Meadow View party to dinner, which was accepted.

Lady Fortescue had wished to include Paul Beresford, but heard he was in London on Mr. White's business, so the Vicar was asked to make a sixth at the little gathering.

It seemed to Lady Fortescue that Ivy had never looked so beautiful before; yet she wore a very simple dress of cream-coloured lace, with only dark crimson roses for her ornaments.

Her aunt looked at her with a half-sigh when she came into the drawing-room.

"How like your mother you grow, child!"

Ivy flushed. It was nearly the first time

she had heard her mother's name from Lady Fortescue.

"If only she had lived, Aunt Lucy, just a little longer, so that I could have remembered her! It seems so hard to know nothing of her!"

"It is better as it is," said her aunt, nervously. "My dear Ivy, you must never regret your mother's death. She was very, very unhappy, and Heaven in its mercy took her. I loved her better than the whole world except your uncle, and yet, Ivy, I was glad when I heard of her death."

"Aunt Lucy!"

"Her life was one long sorrow, dear!"

"She must have loved my father so much she could not live without him," said Ivy, simply. "Aunt Lucy, don't you think love an awful thing?"

"What a strange question! No, dear; love is the greatest blessing."

Ivy shook her head.

"I never mean to love anyone."

"Why not?"

"Because if they did not love me back again I think it would kill me!"

"You foolish child! There is no fear you will love anyone not disposed to love you in return."

Ivy shuddered.

"I was talking to old nurse the other day, and she told me the Carews were always unhappy in love unless—"

"That is nonsense!"

"I don't know! Look at mamma having to lose papa so soon? I call that being unhappy in love."

Lady Fortescue could not assert otherwise. She tried to hide her vexation by a question.

"You have not told me the contingency."

You say the Carews are unhappy in love, unless— You must finish your sentence, dear, for you have aroused my curiosity, I confess."

"Unless love comes to them with some great danger. Elsie says that is the legend of the Carews. All love is fatal for them unless it comes hand in hand with peril."

"Ivy, what a superstitious child you are! Hark! I hear wheels. Surely that is Mr. White's brougham!"

It was, and the guests followed. Sir John and Mr. Ainslie entering by another door the little party was complete.

Introductions were soon made. Mr. Ainslie looked with great admiration at Ivy; and as for the millionaire, with him it seemed to be a case of love at first sight.

"Forgive me," he pleaded to Lady Fortescue, as he took her into dinner; "I fear I struck you as a Hottentot for staring at your niece in that eccentric fashion, but Miss Carew reminds me of—of a friend of mine, whom I have not seen for years."

"Resemblances are strange things," said his hostess, a little coldly. "I never see them myself."

"And you are a little offended, are you not, that I should presume to compare another face to Miss Carew's? I grant she is peerlessly beautiful, but yet I think the face I alluded to equalled hers. Your niece is young and happy; the poor girl I am thinking of was heart-broken, tied by her own act to a man she hated and feared; who made life a weariness to her and her child; yet still I think if I showed you Mrs. Gresham's picture you would own the resemblance to your niece."

They were at table now. Lady Fortescue put her glass to her lips and sipped some wine. Her hand trembled so that she could hardly replace the glass by the time she was ready to talk again.

Mr. White had quite forgotten Mrs. Gresham and her likeness to Ivy; he was descending on the beauties of Meadow View, and praising the old house in terms warm enough even for Lady Fortescue's desires.

"If ever I buy a house that is the kind I should choose. Just the sort of place to call home. I suppose it is very old?"

"Three hundred years, I think. It was built as a dower house for Southlands. Sir John and I dream of making it a wedding gift to Ivy. Of course she has her own estate of Carew, but Kent is so far away; we should want her nearer sometimes."

"Of course, and it would be natural she should own her birthplace. We all have a kind of enthusiasm for the house where we were born."

"Have you?"

"I have no knowledge of where it was. I am a soldier of fortune, dear lady; one of those latter-day productions, a 'self made man.'"

Mr. Ainslie was to sleep at Southlands, and perhaps it was natural he should linger in the smoking-room with Sir John when the Meadow View carriage had driven off and the ladies had retired.

"A first-rate fellow. Don't you think so?" asked the Baronet. "No nonsense about him, and if he began the world without a shilling he managed to pick up a good education and all the little niceties of life. I declare I expected to see him eat with his knife or to hear him drop his 'h's.' I think no one would take him for one who had risen from the ranks."

"I don't like him!"

The Vicar was famous for plain speaking, but still even he had rarely delivered himself of such an opinion of anyone after a single meeting.

"Why not?" demanded Sir John. "I call him a first-rate fellow."

"He is playing a part."

"Nonsense!"

"I am certain of it. Why did he and his sister exchange glances so often? Why did she look at him as though to warn him of danger when he was talking about Paris?"

"Perhaps," suggested the Baronet, who, if he had an amicable little weakness about his own great importance, very rarely displayed it; "perhaps, Ainslie, they were a little nervous at dining here, anxious to make a good impression and that sort of thing, you know."

The Vicar shook his head.

"White is the fashion just now. I was told by a London friend he could enter any society he pleased, and that dukes were not above accepting hints from him on financing. He came to London last December, and has done nothing but coin money ever since. He has been courted by all the aristocratic world, and might have married anyone he fancied, but he abjured society altogether; shut himself up in his own groove and went on making money. My correspondent says it was like a thunderbolt when people heard he was going to spend months in the country, and that his object is inscrutable."

"His object is the simplest thing in the world," returned the Baronet. "His brain is overworked, and his doctors have ordered him country air and perfect quiet."

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"Ainslie!"

"My dear Sir John, I'm very sorry to offend you, but I distrust this man."

"Most unwarrantably, as it seems to me."

"That remains to be proved. You say his object in coming here was perfect quiet; if so, it is strange his sister should have told Lady Fortescue his aim was cheerful society. Then another thing, how did they hear of Meadow View?"

"It has been on the agents' books for years."

"And the agents, doubtless, claimed their usual commission."

"Why, no," confessed the Baronet, who

was truthful to the backbone. "Now I remember he can't have been to the agents, for I have heard nothing of them. His lawyer wrote to me direct, and inquired if the house known as Meadow View was still to let. I asked for references and had two—one his banker, the other the lawyer in question—a well-known firm."

"Hem!"

"So you must own for once you are mistaken—eh! Ainslie? For my own part I confess I have taken a great fancy to the man!"

Mr. Ainslie said no more, but he kept to his own opinion. A lonely, somewhat reserved man, the Fortescues were his dearest friends, and he could not have quarrelled with them even if they crossed his prejudices. He had taken an unmitigated dislike to George White, but he was conscious himself he had but little cause to do so, except a presentiment the man was an impostor, and he could hardly expect Sir John to respect his presentiment more than the verdict of a banker and a firm of lawyers.

As he lay awake that night—and it was hours before he could sleep—he became conscious of two things, one that he had seen Mr. White before, the other that the financier was conscious of the meeting, and did not desire any allusion to it. In vain he tried to recall the circumstances of how and where he had seen the man who had impressed Sir John so favourably. Memory would not assist him.

George White appeared to be under fifty—a prosperous good-looking man, well preserved, with jet black hair which curled stiffly and was quite untouched by grey. He wore a thick beard and whiskers; these gave him a foreign appearance which his complexion heightened, since it was bronzed by exposure to foreign suns. The strangest anomaly about the man was that to look at him you would set him down at once as a foreigner, his speech, conversation and manners were essentially English.

The account he gave of himself "an Englishman who had lived many years abroad" was borne out by abundant evidence.

This was rather a blow to the Vicar's theory. If the man were an impostor why had he not taken a foreign title? He was distressingly frank about himself—plain George White, the son of no one in particular, the architect of his own fortunes, and who—he was generous enough to confess—had never managed to get on in the world until his widowed sister trusted her wealth to him, when he speedily made a lucky hit and had continued turning all he touched to gold ever since.

"I can't do anything," decided the poor Vicar as sleep at last came nearer to him. "It's no use speaking to Sir John till I have something to go on. I'll just watch. I don't believe in Mr. White or his sister either, and I think they have some motive in coming here which we can't make out."

He was almost asleep when, by the moonlight which stole in at the unshuttered window, he saw lying on the dressing-table his watch and chain—a simple thing enough, but it supplied the link he had sought so vainly. It was not Mr. White he had seen before, but Mrs. Austin, and the likeness between the mother and sister explained his mistake.

How it all came back to him! It was a year or more after Captain Carew's death, and he was alone in his lodgings. He was not vicar of Starham then, but senior curate, with all the work and very little pay.

Sir John and Lady Fortescue were in London, and a great sense of loneliness and low spirits had fallen on the young

clergyman as he sat in his little parlour thinking over things in general.

Oh! how it all came to him. His landlady's warning someone wanted to see him, and then the entrance of a tall, well-made woman wearing the dress of a hospital nurse, the silver cross of some order of charity on her breast.

"I have heard you are a good man," she began, unceremoniously. "You would not be hard on the unfortunate?"

"I was never hard on anyone in my life!" The nurse produced a locket of plain gold, with a monogram in small seed pearls.

"She said I was to bring this as a token. She thought you would not fail to recognise it, sir."

Recognise it! It had been his birthday gift to the woman who was now Helen Carew, when she was an innocent, guileless child of perhaps thirteen. Recognise it! Why the very sight of it carried him back to the dreams of his youth.

"I know the locket," he said, gently, "and the sender. Tell me, what can I do for her?"

"You can take this, and deliver it to her sister," placing a letter in his hand; "and you can give me news of those she loves, and the home that once was hers, to carry back to her on her bed of sickness."

Ainslie did not know the secret of Mrs. Carew's life. He had ventured once to ask Sir John, and the Baronet's reply had silenced him.

"Never speak her name. Don't ask me what she has done. I don't know, and I don't want to know. It is enough for me that I, who loved her with a brother's affection, and thought her the purest, truest woman in the world, after her sister, would hold my wife back from a meeting with her as from a contact with all that was vile and worthless. She may be living, but to us she died a year ago."

Hugh Ainslie took the letter, and tried to speak words of comfort. He offered to go himself to Mrs. Carew, but the nurse thought that hardly needful; she would telegraph if her patient grew worse. Would he not tell her of Lady Fortescue and Meadow View? Thus entreated he said the Fortescues at present seemed implacable in their resentment, but he still hoped time would soften their feelings. Meadow View was empty. He would write to Mrs. Carew gladly if he had her address.

The nurse wrote it down at once, and then left him with expressions of warmest gratitude.

He wrote that very night to the address given him—a tender, sympathetic letter, urging the erring one (he knew she was erring, though the nature of her sin had been kept from him), to repentance, and telling her while he lived she had a friend.

No reply came. He was beginning to despair when his appeal came back to him through the dead-letter office, endorsed "No such street in London." Then he glanced at the packet given him for Lady Fortescue.

The nurse had told him Mrs. Carew wished him to read it before sending it to her sister, but it had seemed to him almost a sacrilege.

He had detained the letter only, because he was uncertain of Lady Fortescue's whereabouts, and did not like to expose it to any risk. Now he broke the seal, hoping to find Helen Carew's address. The nurse had written it herself—97, Fotheringhay-street, London, N.W.—but since it seemed there was a mistake no doubt the letter would set it right.

The letter, three sheets of thick writing paper folded inside each other, and when he opened the last a single line in pencil,—

"There is no letter, and Helen Carew

didn't send this. You can put it in the fire now, for its purpose has been answered."

Hugh Ainslie wore himself nearly to a nervous fever over the affair, but he could make nothing of it. He was generous enough not to share his trouble with the Fortescues; he felt it would be cruel to tell them of the episode. He never explained it even to himself, the locket being on his watch chain. That, at least, was genuine since it still contained Lady Fortescue's portrait, which he had begged of her, and placed in it in days gone by to make his gift more acceptable to her sister.

The locket was Nell's, therefore the messenger must in some measure have come from her. Why she should have come at all, why have sought him out, and have left a false address, confused him.

He went up to London soon after, and saw a friend well up in nursery institutions, sisterhoods, &c. To him he described minutely (Reader, I know man seldom can describe women's dress, but the Rev. Hugh Ainslie at this stage of his career was a ritualistic curate, and as learned in fabrics, colours, and such things as a lady's her attire, and then demanded to know the uniform of which institution it was.

The answer convinced him he had been taken in. The whole attire was a combination of at least three distinctive dresses. A sister of mercy, a hospital nurse, and a deaconess would each have recognised some part of it as their own distinctive garb.

The woman was an imposter dressed up for the occasion, but what she wanted, why she came, or the part she played in Helen Carew's life, there was nothing to tell.

"Do you miss anything?" asked the friend, who was much interested.

"Nothing at all."

"You are certain?"

"Positive. No; gain was not the object, since the journey from London must have cost her something, and she left the locket in my keeping."

"Designedly?"

"Certainly. Of her own free will."

"I don't like it Ainslie."

"More do I—"

"You had better tell the Fortescues."

"I can't, Bertram; you don't know what simple, kindly people they are. The suspense would kill them."

"Well, if you don't tell them you had better put the whole thing out of your head."

"Why?"

"Because it may be years and years before you hear any more of it."

"Then you think I shall hear?"

"Yes."

"Really?"

"I am superstitious, Ainslie. I don't profess to explain the matter, but it has made a great impression on me. I believe you will see that woman again, but not until you have well-nigh forgotten her first visit."

"I shall never forget it!"

"I will put my meaning in other words—you will see her again, but not until she believes you have forgotten her."

"I shall know her anywhere even years after."

"I doubt it."

"Why?"

"Because she is evidently no novice at deceit. The nurse's costume was assumed. How are you to tell what disguise she will choose to adopt next time for your benefit?"

"She was a very remarkable woman. I should know her anywhere."

"What twenty years hence, with cheeks wrinkled with time, hair dyed to deceive, and dress totally different? I have great faith

in your sagacity, Hugh, but I do think you overrate it."

"Perhaps I shall never have the chance of testing it."

"I think you will. Is there no particular feature about her time could not alter?"

The curate thought a moment; then it seemed to flash on him suddenly.

"One of her fingers was slightly misshapen—so slightly that a glove would hide it; but nurses do not wear gloves, so I noticed it."

"Ah!"

They parted soon after. For many a year Hugh Ainslie kept a look out for the return of his mysterious visitor. For many a year he was what is called on the alert, but she never came again; and when he heard of Mrs. Carew's death he left off expecting her, and, by degrees, but for the locket on his watchchain, he might almost have forgotten the episode.

And now, as he tossed restlessly through the watches of the summer night, the sight of the moon gleaming on his boyhood gift of long ago lighted him to the revelation.

He had not seen Mr. White before; but he had seen the sister who was almost his double. Mrs. Ainslie, the wealthy widow, whom the Fortescues were so anxious to make friends with, was the woman who, disguised as a hospital nurse, had visited him some eighteen years or so before.

He could not doubt it. She had excused herself from playing that evening by saying a childhood's accident had made her little finger so short she had never been able to learn the piano. The nurse had been young—or seemed so—with fair hair and skin. Mrs. Ainslie was middle-aged, and dark enough for a Spanish American; but no time, no disguise had obliterated the deformity of her left hand.

"It is she!"

That was the Vicar's last thought, but, on waking, the whole thing seemed too marvellous, too unheard of, to be true. He felt he must have other proof. There was more than one woman in the world with a misshapen little finger.

The proof came to him three days later in an invitation to dine at Meadow View. He had always preserved the slip of paper on which the nurse had written Mrs. Carew's bogus address. Producing this from a secret drawer in his desk he compared it with Mrs. Ainslie's friendly request for his company at dinner.

The hands were identical—every curve, every flourish, the same.

"Heaven help us all!" was poor Mr. Ainslie's prayer as he noted this. "There is some awful conspiracy on foot, but what it means, what its object is, I have no idea. Helen is dead. Poor weary soul! what harm can their plotting do now she rests in her quiet grave?"

A spasm of agony shot through him; he clung to the table for support. The truth had come to him suddenly as a flash of lightning. The danger threatened not his dead love, but her living child!

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 1974. Back Nos. can be obtained through any newsagent.)

One of the most pathetic sights on the occasion of the funeral procession of the Queen through London was poor blind Captain Towse, with his companion in misfortune, Lieutenant Meiklejohn, short of an arm, standing among their fellow Gordons, and helping to hold the route. The former was in great anxiety lest someone should forget to tell him when the moment had come for his last salute to the great dead Queen.

AN INIQUITOUS MARRIAGE.

Concluding chapters of this remarkable story, detailing how Lord Maundrell quarrels with his father-in-law and grows more and more distant to his wife. Maundrell eventually meets his death, and Barry Castle-maine claims Gabrielle for his wife.

CHAPTER V.

THREE months had passed, and in the old Hall great preparations were being made for the return of the bridegroom and his bride. They had spent the honeymoon in roving from one town to another in Germany, Italy, France; and Gabrielle had written long letters to her father, descriptive of their journeyings, but it troubled him that she never mentioned her husband, save in an accidental fashion.

Maundrell had written himself to him, begging him not to present himself at the Hall on the night of their return, as Gabrielle would be over-tired, and the excitement of seeing him would be too great for her. And all that livelong day Smith tortured himself by imagining she was ill, perhaps fading, as her mother had done before her.

Of the Castlemaines Gabrielle knew nothing, for no sooner were her fetters riveted than her husband utterly forbade any correspondence between them, saying, "You owe it to me, Gabrielle, to drop them; they behaved very shabbily towards me, and I am not likely to forget it;" and she had submitted with a meekness born of her very hopelessness.

So she came to her home and walked calmly down the ranks of bowing, smiling servants, taking all this homage and respect with the air of one "to the manner born." She was changed greatly. Her timidity had given way to a proud dignity it pleased Maundrell to see. The sweet mouth had grown firmer and somewhat scornful. The beautiful eyes were so weary, so unutterably sad, that it made one's heart ache to look into their sorrowful depths. The low voice was languid, but through its languor ran a note of deepest pain and despair.

Although they were alone, Gabrielle dressed for dinner—it was her husband's whim that she should never omit this ceremony. And when he came down that night she looked so fair that he took her in his arms and kissed her. He was fond of her yet, and kind in his own way, and she—well, she was grateful to him. But she was already learning what manner of man she had married, and respected him accordingly—could scarcely repress a look of horror when he caressed her.

In the morning Smith called at his son-in-law's house, and was shown into a handsome room where he was told to await his lady. How impatiently he listened for her step, the rustling of her garments! How he longed for the sight of her dear face! And in a moment the door was flung wide, and a figure in a wonderful dressing gown rushed in, entered the shelter of his embrace, and throwing loving arms about his neck sobbed with hidden face upon his breast.

Just for a little while neither could speak; but when the man had won some semblance of composure, he said—

"Look up, my pretty one, my Gabrielle! Let me see the dear face I have hungered for all these long, sad weeks."

She lifted her head then, and smiled upon him through her tears.

"You are happy, Gabrielle?" eagerly.

"Tell me that, my darling!"

"I am quite happy now, dear," and she nestled the closer to him, "quite happy."

"That is good hearing. After all, my dear, I was right in making a great lady of

you! You are in your proper position. I am a proud man to-day! And Frederick loves you just as well as in the days of your courtship. Is it not so?"

"He loves me very dearly," she answered, with lowered lashes. "And now, father, tell me of yourself, and how you contrived to live without me these three long months?"

"Oh, there is nothing to tell. I only want to hear of you, your pleasures and triumphs."

She smiled up at him.

"What very great faith you have in my powers. But come and sit down beside me, and we will make mutual confession."

There was so much to tell that the morning passed rapidly, and Gabrielle was astonished when the luncheon bell rang.

"You will stay, of course, dear father?" and he readily consented.

The dainty meal was spread in an adjoining room, and as they entered Maundrell rose from an easy-chair with an air of boredom and vexation.

"I did not know you were here, Frederick," the young wife said, gently.

"Oh, Beckford told me your father was with you, and I had no wish to intrude. I thought you would prefer to spend the first few hours alone with him, Gabrielle."

"That was kind of you," and she seated herself, taking care to keep her father close to her side.

All through the meal Maundrell was very quiet and reserved; but in reply to Smith's question, was he not well, he answered, "quite; but just a trifle bored with his journey and other things." But when at last Smith prepared to go he sprang up with alacrity.

"I will walk with you a little way," he said, and the two men went out together into the clear and frosty air. The younger was the first to speak.

"Look here, Smith, I've something to say to you. Of course, as you are my wife's father I do not wish to cut you off from all intercourse with her; but you must see for yourself that you are hardly the sort of fellow I can introduce to my friends!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the other, turning a livid, startled face upon him.

"This: That Lady Maundrell may visit you occasionally, but I utterly refuse to receive you at the Hall. Why, to do so would be to lose caste at once! Is that plain enough?"

"Quite," bitterly. "You could not make it plainer. But you apparently forget all I have done for you—my labours to extricate your affairs from the confusion they were in."

"No, I don't; but your motives were not disinterested! If you assisted me you had your reward. If your daughter brought me wealth, I gave her position and title. We are quits!"

"But," sneered Smith, "if I were to withdraw the supplies how could you maintain the position and title of which you boast?"

"You will not do that," confidently, "for your daughter's sake! You love her too well."

"But if I showed her what you are? If I but spoke the word, 'come,' she would give up all and return to me."

"So disgracing herself in the eyes of the world! There is nothing for you but submission to this thing. You cannot alter it! You are bound hand and foot."

Smith turned on him with an oath.

"What will you tell my child to account for my non-appearance under your roof? Shall you tell her the truth about—me?"

"Not if you are discreet, and I think you will be, as it is for Gabrielle's sake."

And now, having said all there is to say, I will go back. You shall see her to-morrow."

Left to himself "Iniquity" made his way to his home, and locking himself in his office cast himself down before his desk, and buried his face upon it. Was it for this he had persuaded his child into a marriage she feared? Never to see her face save now and again when Maundrell graciously permitted her to visit him? Never to glory in her triumphs, to watch her queneing it with the best, to mark her pleasure or happiness? Better, far better, he thought to have given her to an honourable gentleman like Castle-maine. How shall I bear it? How shall I bear it? and in that hour's anguish surely many of those he had oppressed and wronged were fully avenged. When at last he rose he looked years older, and the sombre eyes seemed deeper and more sombre still.

It was a cruel blow, and the more he thought of it the more he feared for his darling's happiness. But in the morning when Gabrielle came, she saw no change in him. He had schooled himself to meet her naturally, and she spent a happy hour with him; was so loving, so tender, that for the while he half forgot his woe. But when she kissed him good-bye it came upon him with twofold force that by his own act he had cut himself off from her, and catching her close he groaned rather than said,—

"Gabrielle, I miss you so sorely I sometimes wish I had kept you with me here; I could have made you happy."

"It is too late to think of that now, dear!" she said gently. "I am a wife!"

"Yes, my darling, yes, and I am a silly old fool to talk in such a fashion; but I love you so dearly, I sometimes wonder if even you can guess all that you are to me, my child!"

"I know, father, by my own heart," and having kissed her he led her out into the cold sunshine. An elegantly-appointed carriage was waiting her, but as she was stepping in a lady she had known whilst with the Castlemaines crossed the road, and spoke her name entreatingly.

Gabrielle turned quickly.

"Mrs. Villiers, this is an unexpected pleasure!" Then something in the other's expression checked her speech, and drove the colour from her cheeks.

"Have you not heard? Do you not know the great trouble which has befallen your old friends? It is a sad home-coming for you—you loved Nora so well."

"It is Nora, then? What has happened? Is she ill?" Gabrielle asked with stiff lips.

"Worse than that! She died yesterday, and her people are all but demented with the loss."

Gabrielle stood as if turned to stone, until her father touching her, asked,—

"My dear, what will you do?" Then she started.

"Drive home, Charles, and tell his lordship I shall not return to luncheon," then to her father, "I must go to them; they were very good to me."

She left him then without further speech, and went swiftly up the street, walking like one in a dream. She could hardly realise it yet. Nora dead! That gentle, lovely life already over! That sweet, young face "soon to be hid by the dust of the grave!" Oh, it was cruel! It was cruel! And she had died, not knowing that Gabrielle loved her, thought of her still by day and night with gratitude and blessing!

People who knew her looked curiously after her, but she was unconscious of their scrutiny. She forgot her husband's commands—(surely they would not hold good in such a case as this?)—his probable displeasure in her passionate desire to see

Nora once again, to comfort those who mourned her loss to day.

She reached the house at last, and begging to see Mrs. Castlemaine, was admitted by a red-eyed maid. Barry was in the hall. He stood aside, and let her pass, and so she entered his mother's presence. The unhappy woman was rocking herself to and fro in a passion of anguish and despair; but she looked up as Gabrielle entered, and seeing her gave a low shuddering cry. The girl ran forward with outstretched hands.

"My dear! my dear!" she said, and the next moment Mrs. Castlemaine was weeping on her neck. She had never loved this girl; but now in her grief she turned to her because Nora had held her so dear, had so often asked for her in her brief illness.

"Why did you not write or come?" asked the mother, when she could speak coherently.

"I cannot tell you, dear friend!" and the other understood and was silent. "I knew nothing of your sorrow. I was utterly ignorant of our darling's death until this morning. Then I came to you at once. I could not stay away. And now, dear, let me see her, perhaps for the last time. Oh! what shall I say or do to comfort you?"

"You have done me good already. I thought I was going mad. I have never shed a tear since she died until now; and my tears have saved my reason. When I saw you standing there, and remembered how she always loved you—how she seemed so well to understand why you neither wrote nor sent any message—then all at once my heart grew soft—"

Her voice failed her then; but, presently, she went on again,—

"Now come; there is nothing dreadful about her. She was ill so short a time—only three weeks. It was rapid decline."

With that she led the way to a quiet chamber where, on a snowy bed, lay all that remained of gentle Nora.

A smile was still lingering about the white mouth, a look of ineffable peace was on the still face, and the heavy scent of hothouse flowers filled the room.

Gabrielle fell on her knees beside the bed, and bowed her head as if in prayer. When she looked up she was as white as the dead girl, but quite calm.

Stooping, she kissed the clay-cold, unresponsive lips, the pure brow; and then in utter silence turned and left the room.

She stayed long with the afflicted mother, Frances and Estelle, both pale and heavy-eyed, joined them, and seemed glad to have her there.

Nora's death had softened their hearts, (at least, for awhile), Barry she did not see again, for which she was immeasurably thankful; and when she rose to go it was getting very late. But she declined all escort, and made her way quickly to the Hall.

Her husband met her at the foot of the staircase, and turning, accompanied her to her own room. Closing and locking the door, he demanded savagely where she had been.

"Do not be angry with me, Frederick. Indeed, I think you will not when I tell you all. I met Mrs. Villiers this morning; and—and oh! Frederick; poor, pretty Nora is dead!" and she burst into tears of bitterest pain and grief.

"Go on!" he, said with cruel eyes fixed sternly on her white and tear-stained face.

"I was so shocked, so grieved! so anxious, too, if possible, to show my sympathy and my sorrow, that I went at once to Mrs. Castlemaine. She was very glad to have me."

"How about my commands, my lady? You utterly ignored them!"

"For the time I forgot everything but the fact of Nora's death. Do not be angry with me!"

But he was deaf to her pleading, heedless alike of her grief and her tears; and such a storm of abuse broke over her—such vile epithets were hurled upon her—that shuddering, she covered her ears with her hands, and waited in dumb agony for him to cease.

Striding towards her he seized the little trembling fingers, and bending down hissed, rather than said—

"Remember, if you go there again it shall be worse for you! I am your husband, the controller of your actions, the sole arbiter of your fate, and I expect obedience! Do you understand, my lady?"

"Yes!"

And the tremulous lips could frame no other word.

"Very well, take care. You remember!" and with that he flung her from him violently.

Wearily the weeks wore by, and having once thrown off his mask Maundrell was less careful to wear it now, and alas! alas! he was growing tired of his prize. Her pale, sad face angered him, and many a time he spoke such evil and bitter words to her that she would start up crying in her heart. "I will leave him, I will go back to my father!" but always she stifled the impulse, telling herself she was his wife, and the tie which bound them was indissoluble.

To her repeated inquiries concerning her father's absence from the Hall, Maundrell would reply that "the old man was happier with his ledgers and gold than he could be elsewhere."

He would not be at ease with fine company; and when he grew incensed at her questioning, he added, "I doubt if any of our set would condescend to sit down at table with him!"

She reared her head high then.

"There is not one of your friends who can compare with my father; and if they will not receive him, neither will I receive them!"

"Take care! You don't know what you are saying," he retorted, with an ominous flash in his eyes, and she was silent.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE and more, as the time went on, did Maundrell show himself in his true colours, and rumour was rife in Buckley that his young wife was not so happy as she should be.

It is hard to hide one's affairs from one's servants, or to effectually stop their gossip, and the little town was soon agast with the stories of my lord's mode of life, and full of pity for "my lady," who was so kind and gentle to all, that even the most discontented had "a good word for her."

Further and further apart husband and wife drifted; more frequent grew my lord's demands on "Iniquity's" purse; and the latter, because he so loved his child, so wished to hide his true character from her, paid his debts with scarcely any remonstrance.

Sometimes he met Barry, who was flourishing mightily now, and in his heart of hearts he wished he had given his daughter to this honourable and upright gentleman.

In every possible way Maundrell held father and daughter apart, but he could not lessen the love and confidence existing between them.

About this time, too, he began to be absent from home very often, offering neither excuse nor explanation; and "Iniquity" knew, to his rage and shame,

that he had wearied of his wife, and sought pleasure in the society of women of doubtful position, and still more doubtful morals.

It was gall and wormwood to him; but rather than increase Gabrielle's misery, or enlighten her innocent mind, he held his peace; only endeavouring in indirect ways to recompense her for her suffering.

Sometimes in her walks or drives she met Mrs. Castlemaine and her daughters; and although she did not venture to speak, her eyes were eloquent with feeling, and the elder lady, at least, did not misunderstand her.

Barry she never saw. He was absent from England, having gone to Palmiste to regulate some affairs in the branch house there; and she thanked Heaven daily that she was spared the pain and confusion of meeting him.

She had been married nearly a year, and her birthday had come; and although she now regarded Maundrell with loathing and contempt, in her resolution to be always a loyal and dutiful wife she would do nothing without first consulting him. So she went to him.

"Frederick, to-morrow is my birthday, and I would like to make it quite a red-letter day. I have been thinking how we might spend it most pleasantly."

"You ought to have made arrangements a fortnight ago!" he said savagely. "It is too late to do anything now. You should remember that you are not one of the middle-class now, who give their friends an invite half-an-hour before the ceremony comes off. And I want to go to town by the mail to-morrow."

"Pray do not let me interfere with your movements," she answered with quiet grace. "I had no thought of asking a multitude. Indeed, I only wish my father to share our pleasure. We have always been in the habit of meeting on my birthday."

"Then you may dispense with the habit!" coarsely. "I won't allow you to entertain him here!"

"Why?" she asked, so sharply that for a moment he was staggered; but recovering his native impudence, he said, coolly,—

"Simply because I don't choose! He is a rascally tradesman! I consort only with gentlemen!"

For a moment hot words trembled on her lips, but she was of a patient and long-suffering nature, and so checked them, only saying,—

"Very well, Frederick, I will spend the day with my father at Great George Street."

"You will do nothing of the kind, madam! You will remain here to entertain some friends of mine!"

Her face flushed hotly, and for the first time since he had known her the sweet mouth was mutinous. One glance she cast on him, full of utmost contempt and rebellion, and then, without a word, she turned and left him.

He started up as though to follow her, but as a sudden thought came to him he sat down once again, a savage look in his eyes, a bitter sneer about his sensual mouth.

"So she dares to defy me! Well, well, we will see who will come off conqueror. If she goes, it will be worse for her and for him!" and then he set to work to plan her discomfiture and her father's.

Towards noon his plans were complete, and summoning Gabrielle to his presence, he said—

"I am going to town earlier than I thought. If you want a companion send to Mrs. Conyers. She will be glad to come (I shall let the fellows know of the change in my plans)."

"I prefer solitude," said Gabrielle, in a voice that fairly startled him with its intense frigidity. "One's own society is

sometimes pleasantest. Have you anything else to say?"

"Nothing, only this; you know my wishes. Take care that you obey them!" menacingly.

"It is only bullies who threaten!" she answered, in the same cold, level tones, and closed the interview.

Later in the day Maundrell had his belongings packed. Ostensibly he was going to London, but in reality he intended going no farther than a neighbouring village.

Such hate against Smith for his influence over Gabrielle was in his heart, such increasing dislike of her, that he felt he would stop at nothing to hurt either.

She should know what manner of man she had so long defied, and he would suffer all the tortures arising from her hate and disdain.

And with this amiable resolve Maundrell left the Hall the following morning. At the very last moment Gabrielle had said—

"You remember what I said to you last night? I am going to spend the day with my father."

"You must please yourself, but don't quarrel with the results of your disobedience!"

She looked at him unflinchingly.

"I am your wife and Heaven knows in all things right I have endeavoured to do your will. But there are limits even to a wife's obedience and submission. Heaven would surely not pardon such a sin as ingratitude towards such a father as mine! At least I owe him some love, and duty, too."

Maundrell shrugged his shoulders.
"Go your own headstrong way and rue it!"

But Gabrielle, knowing his violent temper, regarded his words as so many idle threats, and when he had gone dressed herself carefully and went to Great George-street. Her father met her with outstretched hands.

"My dear, this is better than I bargained for. I hardly thought Maundrell would allow you to come to-day?"

"I am here without his consent. Don't you know, dear, you are first in my love always?"

"Gabrielle?" he said, reproachfully, although his heart beat fast with triumph, "he is your husband!"

Such despair! such utter anguish in the eyes lifted to his!

He shrank back.

"My dearest child, are you not happy? Tell me all! You may safely confide in me."

"Happy!" oh! the anguish in her voice! "Father, father, let me stay with you for ever. My life is a burden to me! He hates me! and I—oh heaven! I loathe him—my husband!"

He caught his breath. This was worse than anything he had imagined; but Gabrielle was beyond all power of reticence now.

"He hates me, and he would hold us apart! Oh! father, keep me with you. I shall go mad if I return to him!"

And he fell on his knees before her.

"Forgive me, Gabrielle! Oh! my child, forgive me; I meant to make you great and happy, and I have wrought you only misery. I, who loved you before riches, and honour, and heaven—"

"Oh, hush, my darling! hush! Do not so distress and condemn yourself."

"I must, for I alone am to blame," and crouching at her feet he hid his face in the folds of her gown. "I have given you grief for your daily meat and drink. I have crushed every sweet and natural feeling in your heart—"

"No, no! always the best and dearest of

parents. You have nothing with which to reproach yourself. Oh! do not kneel there! Lay your head upon my breast until this paroxysm is past, and then, for just this one day, let us be happy."

"Tell me one thing," he pleaded. "Was there any other you preferred to Maundrell?"

He was looking at her then, and he saw her fair face crimson, her lashes droop until they veiled the softness of her eyes.

"You must not ask me that," she said, and her hand rested with infinite tenderness upon his head.

Sighing heavily, she rose.
"I wish I had died before I worked you such misery!" he said.

She bent and kissed him.

"My father, hush! What would life be to me without you?" and now, in a lighter tone, "Let us remember only that to-day is my birthday, and be happy in it."

"I have something to show you, Gabrielle—a little gift I hoped you would approve. I intended sending it, but I am glad now I did not. I would prefer to see your delight, and know that I had exercised taste and judgment in my selection. He cannot object to it. It is worthy even your high position, my dear."

With that he dived into the recesses of his desk, and from a shabby casket took out a glittering necklace—old-fashioned, but of greatest value; every stone gleamed and burned with such brilliancy that one's eyes almost ached looking upon it.

"There are few such stones," Smith says, triumphantly. "These diamonds are of the first water, and the rubies are like specks of fire. Put it on, child, and let me see you."

"I must thank you first, father. Why you must have spent a fortune over it! It is much, much too handsome for me; but I shall wear it often for your sake."

As she clasped the necklace about her white throat he watched her with undiminished love and admiration, thinking how well they became her.

"They look incongruous," she said, smiling, "on this plain stuff frock; but you shall see them on when I am bravely dressed, and I expect you to praise my appearance, because you know, dear, fine feathers make fine birds!"

All through that afternoon she was so cheerful and seemed so happy that many of her father's doubts and fears were allayed.

What happy hours they spent together! How altogether unconscious they were of coming ill!

And yet, from that day they would never be quite the same to each other. The relationship in which they stood would be changed, and Gabrielle would be the protector, not the protected.

They were sitting together that evening. Gabrielle on a low stool at her father's feet, when the hall door was flung open violently, and swift steps came towards the room where they sat.

Full of vague apprehension the girl started to her feet and cast a frightened look towards the door! Hasty hands pushed aside the heavy curtains, and in a moment Maundrell was before them, flushed and scowling.

"Frederick!" gasped his wife, "I thought you were in town!"

"Of course you did, and taking advantage of my absence came to this cursed place! Get your hat and wraps and come with me; and remember from to-day you are not to cross this threshold—that you hold no communication with your father!"

"In all things else I will obey you," she answered, trembling, "but never in this!"

"Have you no regard, madam, for the honour of my name? Do you think it seemly to consort with such a fellow as that?" pointing a scornful finger at Smith. "Why, there is not one in the town who does not execrate him!"

"Hush! hush!" shrieked the usurer, "never tell her; it would break her heart and mine—it would break her heart and mine—my Gabrielle, my little daughter!"

"He can tell me nothing, dearest father, that could change my love. I trust you too fully!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Maundrell, mockingly, "you will sing a different tune soon. Ask the good people of Buckley what he is; usurer, rogue, the oppressor of widows and children, the grinder down of poor men! There is not a luxury you ever knew; not a stone of those blazing about your neck that has not been wrung from some poor wretch's breaking heart! He is known far and wide as—"

"No, no!" Smith screamed, with a cry like that of a beast at bay. "No more—do not tell her that! I cannot bear it, I cannot bear it!"

"Far and wide, as I was saying," continued Maundrell, coolly, "he is known as 'Iniquity' Smith, because of his many virtues."

He turned and looked at his wife. There she stood, white as a ghost, with her arms fallen by her sides, her small hands fiercely clenched, her beautiful eyes dilated and full of horror too great for words.

And confronting her was her father, with drooping head, looking suddenly old and feeble, afraid to speak, afraid to lift his eyes to hers, and shivering as with cold.

Surely Maundrell might have felt some pity for them, some remorse for this deed of his.

"Is—this—true?" the unhappy girl asked at last in a hoarse, uncertain voice. "Tell me—father—the father I have loved and worshipped. Hide nothing from me—now."

He staggered forward, and for the second time that day fell at her feet, moaning out,—

"It was for your sake, for your sake! Oh! for the love of Heaven, do not hate me!"

With one hand pressed to her brow, and her fair face uplifted in a passion of agony and despair, she cried aloud,—

"Oh! this is too hard for me, too hard! Father—I loved you as the good love Heaven! All my hopes, all my pride were centred in you; and now—now! Oh, it is worse than death to know you as you are—hated, despised, condemned of all. I wish I had died before I learned the awful truth."

"Gabrielle! will you turn against me, too? I am an old man, a poor old man, and I have laboured for you, spent my years in making you happy."

And suddenly, as his voice died wailingly out, the merciful tears came to her; and with those tears such a flood of love and pity that she knelt beside him, laying her cheek to his, spoke his name softly, coupled with an endearing word. He had sinned—yes, but it was for her! He was hated and despised—for her sake.

"My dear, my dear!" she sobbed, "the blow was sudden and cruel, the shock severe; but now I am myself again, and I see how wicked I should be to utter one reproach against you. Father, I will love you more and more as the time wears by. You have no one but me—and it shall be my duty, my happy duty, to minister to you."

"Your duty is to me, madam!" said Maundrell, passionately, "and when you have ended these heroics, you will perhaps oblige me by accompanying me home!"

Still kneeling, still with her arms about

her father's neck, she turned her white face and steady eyes upon her husband.

"My place is *here*," she said, quietly. "He needs me, and you do not! He loves me, you loathe me! I shall never return to the Hall!"

"Take care what you say and do. You may live to repent words and actions alike; and although I could compel you to return to me I shall not do so. But if to-night you refuse to comply with my wishes you will understand from henceforth you are no wife of mine; and should you attempt to enter the Hall at any future time you will find the doors closed against you!"

"Must you go with him, Gabrielle?" said Smith. "Oh, child, it is best so. Think of what the world will say if you separate."

"I care less than nothing for the world's opinion. I have suffered too long, borne too much at his hands, to dream for a moment of returning to him. But for him I should always have kept faith in you, and this bitter hour of humiliation would not have fallen upon us. Frederick, I have been a loyal wife to you, I have tried to please you in all things, but my patience and endurance are at an end. We are best apart!"

"As you will; but I shall give my version of our story to the public!"

Smith started to his feet.

"If you dare to say one word against my child you shall rue it until the day of your death. You seem to forget that you are wholly dependent on me for those luxuries you cannot exist without. Breathe one word that may injure my child, and I withdraw all supplies at once. Knowing this there is small fear that you will harm her in any way. And now go! With all my soul I regret the day I gave her innocent, young life into your hands, and curse the mad ambition that prompted me to forget your follies and vices. I think, my lord, there is not much to choose between 'Iniquity' Smith and the aristocratic rone!"

"Have you done?" in a white heat of fury. "You have tied me hand and foot; but I will be even with you yet. And you, madam, make the most of your hour of triumph; mine is coming. I wish you joy of your bargain!"

And with those words he went out, nor did Gabrielle ever look on his living face again. And when the door had closed upon him she turned to her father.

"Dear!" we must help and comfort each other!" she said; and from that time there was something almost maternal in her manner towards him.

But he was a broken man. The knowledge that his evil doing was no longer a secret from her had aged and changed him, and he took small interest in anything around.

Buckley was excited to a great pitch of curiosity concerning Gabrielle and my lord, but the truth was never known to the gossips; and as the poor girl was as great a favourite as her father was the reverse, Maundrell bore the brunt of their displeasure—was judged guilty by them.

The slow months wore by; and acting upon Gabrielle's earnest entreaties, Smith made restitution wherever restitution was possible, leaving himself a comparatively poor man.

Such terrible revelations came to Gabrielle as she searched his books for him, and wrote his letters; but she never shrank from him now—only clung the closer because he had fallen from honour for her sake.

She never knew the truth about her mother, or how love of gold had always been

her ruling passion. And when, with diminished means, but lighter heart, she moved into a small cottage on the outskirts of the town, he declared himself quite satisfied; "never so happy as now, dear child;" but it was palpable to all that he was growing childish, and would not be long with Gabrielle.

The hunting season came, and she heard that her husband was first and foremost in the field.

Later on one came to her, begging she would go to the Hall.

"My lord had had a terrible fall, and was sinking fast."

She dressed hastily and hurried to the house she had once called home, but only to find Frederick had been dead nearly twenty minutes. His last words were,—

"Tell my poor wife I am sorry for the wrong I did her. She was always good, and I alone am to blame for our rupture."

Those words went far to make Gabrielle's future position in Buckley a happy and honoured one.

Two years came and went, bringing many changes with them. Frances Castlemaine had married Frederick's cousin and successor, who, being a strong-willed man, controlled her caprices firmly and wisely.

Estelle was the wife of a foreign ambassador, and moved in a brilliant circle.

Only Barry remained to comfort Mrs. Castlemaine's declining years. And Gabrielle lived alone, her father being dead.

On a summer's evening as she sat in her tiny garden, she heard a voice that said uncertainly, "Gabrielle!" and lifting her eyes, saw a tall and stalwart figure.

"Gabrielle!" said Barry, coming nearer, "surely I may speak now? Darling, I have loved you long and faithfully. Will not you bid me hope?"

Safe in his arms now! Safe in his love for ever, there was nothing left to desire or pray for, and they clung together the fullness of happiness fell upon them, never to be marred by doubt, or fear, or coldness.

Two hours later he led her to his mother.

"Mother, I have brought you a precious gift!" he said; and she, reading all in a glance, threw her arms about Gabrielle.

"My dear, I wished it! You will be to me as Nora was."

"Heaven helping me I will, mother!" and she kissed the worn cheek tenderly.

[THE END.]

GIVE HIM BACK TO ME.

—:O:—

CHAPTER LI.

GIVEN BACK.

Who can picture the happiness at the Priory, when the master, who had been mourned so sincerely, suddenly appeared in the fullness of health and vigour.

Lady Stapleton could scarcely contain herself for joy, and, unable to restrain her genuine delight, threw her arms round Jack's neck and gave him a hug.

Mrs. Milton, laughing one minute and crying the next, could not be content till she had given him a hearty kiss in memory of the old times when she had often dandled him on her knee.

Jack Sartoris shook hands with Cyril Landon and Bertie Mayne, but as no explanations had been offered, they both were content without anything more—the latter especially looking upon his brother-in-law with an air of wondering speculation.

If he was so delighted to see his wife, and to come back to his own home, what on earth could have kept him away for all these years.

Cyril Landon went back to the Rectory with

the wonderful news, but though it was now early morning no one thought of going to bed.

Violet sat with her hand fast locked in her husband's grasp, her eyes fixed upon his face with a sort of loving wonder.

He had cut off his beard so that he looked more like the lover of her girlhood than the Mr. St. John who had stolen into her heart at Holly Bank; but his hair was many shades darker than it was when she married him—no longer that sunny golden brown which she had loved to look on.

Still he was very handsome, and his large blue eyes, with their dark lashes, were just as honest and true as ever.

"Now tell us all from the very beginning," said Lady Stapleton, as she sipped some hot mulled claret which Mrs. Milton and Webster had concocted between them without waiting for orders.

"Yes, I think we ought to hear all about it," said Bertie Mayne, pulling up his collar. It was all very well to seem glad to see a fellow, but why had he ever gone away?

Jack Sartoris looked at his wife with a deprecating glance, but she squeezed his hand to assure him that whatever he confessed should make no difference in her love.

"Well, to begin at the beginning," he said, with a deep breath. "On the morning of our wedding I received an anonymous letter warning me against Cyril Landon—"

"Dear old Cyril!" exclaimed Bertie, in amazement.

"Yes—Cyril Landon, so you can imagine that I was rather dumfounded when I saw his photograph tumble out of the front of my wife's dress in the train to Dover."

"Yes, and I never told him that I caught it up in a hurry because Gertrude wished me to be photographed at the same place, and I wanted to remember the man's name. It was all my fault," her cheeks crimsoning.

"Not a bit of it; it was mine. I went into such an awful rage that it was enough to frighten you out of your wits. I believe I was mad. Well, we agreed to part. Violet wrote to me to say she was going to Milledore, and she sent back every penny of the money I sent her. Though I was still furious I wasn't quite out of my senses, as I knew that I was responsible for my wife's safety till she was under the care of her aunt. I found out what time she was going, and went in the same train."

"Yes, and saved me from that horrid Frenchman at Calais. Oh! why didn't you speak to me then? I was so longing to make it up."

"I was a fool!" he said, pulling his moustaches: "but in the train I began to think I had been too hasty. I jumped out in a hurry, ready to say or do anything you wanted, and there on the platform I saw Landon ready to welcome you with effusion!"

"Oh, why did I send him?" from Lady Stapleton.

"It certainly was unfortunate," from Bertie, who began to think his brother-in-law was not so very much to blame after all.

"You can imagine the state of mind I was in. Why I didn't kill him I can't think—perhaps the guard who hustled me back into the train saved me from something like manslaughter. Well, time went on. I had one correspondent in England who offered to keep me posted up in my wife's doings."

"Lady Jane! You needn't keep it dark," said Bertie.

Jack frowned, for he had not meant to betray her name; but he knew that he owed it to his wife to make a clear confession, and he went on.

"You remember that night down here when you had a dance? Well, that was the very night I came back, hoping against hope, in spite of all I had heard of Landon's constant visits to Leighton."

"He was Mr. Ingham's ward, and he very soon fell in love with Mabel."

"Yes; but those facts were kept from me. I

saw you with Ralph Armitage—I saw him steal your rose and kiss it—I heard him offer to take my place."

"Did he? I had heard a step and was listening breathlessly, thinking it was you."

"Then you were really thinking of me when I thought you had quite forgotten me?" a bright smile crossing his face. "I was told that Landon's marriage was only a blind—that his wife was sure to die before a year had passed. I saw you at the station, but I was told I should kill you if I showed myself suddenly. I went back to London in a beastly state of mind; but no one told me you were ill. At last I resolved to write to you. I expended a lot of thought on that letter, and never knew how much I hoped from it till I got no answer."

"I never had it. I only heard to-night how it was stolen."

"She confessed it?" with an expression of horror and disgust on his face. "Good heavens, and I trusted her as I would myself! But I mustn't wait. It was Lady Stapleton who suddenly appeared as my guardian angel. She didn't scout me like the rest of your family."

"How could I help it?" demanded Bertie, with an air of injured innocence.

"You couldn't. I needn't tell you what happened at Holly Bank; but you remember how I found Landon kneeling at your feet, and daring to kiss your hands; how I gave him a blow which sent him down. My blood was up—I couldn't stop myself; and then you really looked as if you loved him. You hung over him and nearly fainted; you told me to go, and I told you that you must choose between him and me for the last time. You chose the friend in preference to the husband. Was any further proof wanted?"

"You forget that I didn't know that you were my husband—that I thought my love for you was wrong, and I must strangle it, or to be ashamed for ever."

"Yes, I never thought of that till I was miles away, and then I turned back; but the storm was at its height, and a flash of lightning that seemed to run along the ground made poor Trumpeter shy—a thing he never did before in his life. I suppose I had a spill, passing his hand across his forehead, 'for I remember waking up just as somebody—Armitage, I think it was—was pushing me down the bank.'"

All were listening in perfect silence.

"It seemed odd to me afterwards that any one should push me down instead of helping me up. A big stone rolled down in front of me, and I heard it splash in the river. I thought it was all up with me, but on the very brink my legs caught in a bush, and I was saved."

"My head was so queer that I scarcely remember what I did, but I remember a cottage where I got to at last, after having listened for Trumpeter and called him, but without hearing a sound. I knew the horse must have gone home, or he'd have been down the bank like a shot in answer to my whistle; so after drinking some milk, and lying down for a few hours, I got the man to drive me in the farm-cart to Taunton, and started for London, where I put up at my usual lodgings in Half-Moon-street for the rest of the day."

"Half-Moon-street! I thought you said Albemarle-street?" broke in Lady Stapleton, "and I sent there time after time."

"No, I was only in Albemarle-street when my other rooms were being done up. I went abroad, for there was nothing on earth to keep me here, but I couldn't stay away for long—something always seemed to draw me back. Well, I came, and I saw you coming out of the Haymarket, before the play was over, alone with Landon, and you went off alone with him."

"That was enough to confirm my worst suspicions, but Belfeather tells me he was there,

and that you had been with Lady Stapleton and Mrs. Landon, and Landon was only taking you back because you were ill, but confess it looked as black as my hat—didn't it?"

"Bad enough," said Bertie. "Certainly the fates were against you; and Cyril—the safest man out—seemed to be playing the part of Lancelot to perfection."

"I'm glad you acknowledge it," said Jack, with his beaming smile, "because I know you

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CUT THIS OUT

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thought me a scoundrel. My bankers told me there was a report that I was dead. I told them to hold their tongues for a year, and thought I would see what happened."

"You cruel boy!" said Lady Stapleton, rising, "you were nearly the death of us. First we thought you were drowned, and then murdered."

"Don't talk of it," said Violet, shuddering, as she clung to his arm.

"Did you suspect Armitage?"

"Yes, and Lady Jane came down to ask us to pardon him."

"Like her impudence!" said Jack, sternly; "but I'd sooner forgive her rascally brother than herself. He had you for his motive, and she had none."

"None?" said Violet with a smile.

"None?" echoed Bertie, with wide-open eyes.

"I can't conceive what you mean," said Mr. Sartoris, drawing himself up.

On the fifteenth of June, which was Mrs. Sartoris's birthday, Farndon Court was thronged with a goodly number of guests. It was a beautiful old house, with grey castellated turrets and wide lawns, smooth as satin, shaded on either side by ancient cedars. Far away into the distance stretched an undulating park, where the deer browsed on the tender shoots of the bracken, and grand specimens of forest-trees cast a grateful shade from their wide-spreading branches. Mrs. Milton had been transported to Farndon, without much reluctance on her part, for she was thankful to be under any roof that sheltered her beloved master and mistress. Her smile was like one constant ray of sunshine now; and if asked about her hopes as to the future, she always said she had nothing left to wish for—her happiness was complete.

At Jack's special request the Landons were invited, for the old jealousy had entirely died out.

They both came, and Violet was delighted at the way in which her husband took to them at once. Mabel had falsified all the prophecies of friends and enemies. Her cough had departed, and she was blooming like the roses which were growing on every side. Cyril was never told that he had been the unwilling means of separating husband and wife, but perhaps Lady Stapleton had given him the hint, for there was a slight tinge of reserve in his manner when talking with Violet, which Jack noticed with approbation.

As poor Ralph Armitage was lying in Brompton Cemetery, safe out of reach, and Lady Jane, after a private marriage, had betaken herself and her bridegroom to the West-Indies, Bertie Mayne had nobody to worry. Being deprived of his favourite amusement, he made himself very busy fabricating the most ingenious hypotheses about his brother-in-law's long disappearance from society—for the benefit of everybody in general, and for the further silencing of all calumnious tongues.

"Mr. Sartoris, I must tell you how awfully jolly it is to see you looking so bright!" said a tall young man, who was still the matrimonial prize of Belgravia.

A sigh of utter thankfulness escaped from his hostess's pretty lips.

"Yes, Lord Belfather, I think I am the happiest woman on earth!"

"Then I'm sure Sartoris is the happiest man," looking down with frank admiration into the lovely face he had always admired so much.

"I shall never forget that it was you who gave him back to me," she said softly, and for a moment let her hand rest in his.

"And I can never forget what you've taught me," he said in a low voice; "that a true woman, even when alone, can always hold her own against the world."

[THE END.]

STATISTICS

DENMARK exported no less than 4,838,000 lbs. of eggs in 1899 to the total value of £285,000.

FROM a recent experiment the open air of London was found to contain only one microbe to 38,000,000 or so of dust particles, while in the air of a room among 184,000,000 of dust atoms there was only one germ.

RECENT statistics show a rise in deaths from alcoholism from 45 per million of living persons in 1878 to 77 per million in 1897.

IN the year 1830 all the railroads in the world aggregated only 210 miles; now they measure over 370,000 miles.

DURING the century just closed, 400 human lives, 200 ships, and a quarter of a million of money have been lost in fruitless efforts to discover the north pole.

GEMS

THRIFTLESSNESS has its nemesis in wasted hearts, which is worse than wasted money; in worldly lives, which is worse than want of prudence.

THERE are two things in which we should thoroughly train ourselves—to be slow in taking offence and to be slower in giving it.

HATH ANY wounded thee? Soft language dresses it, forgiveness cures it, and oblivion takes away the scar.

IMPRUDENCE, silly talk, foolish vanity and vain curiosity are closely allied; they are children of one family.

BOOKS without the knowledge of life are useless; for what should books teach but the art of living?

SEEK happiness for yourself, and you will lose it; seek it for others, and you will find it.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES

LITTLE CHICKEN PATTIES.—Roll out some puff-paste three quarters of an inch thick, stamp it into rounds with a cutter, cut these half-way through with a smaller cutter, brush over with beaten egg, and bake in a quick oven for about twenty-five minutes. When done lift the inner circle and scoop out the centre for the patties. Have ready some finely-minced chicken, mixed with a little tongue, cut into tiny cubes and heated in supreme sauce, seasoned with pepper, salt, and cayenne. Place a spoonful of this mixture in each case, replace the cover, and serve very hot.

LEMON SPONGE.—Soak half-an-ounce of gelatine in half-a-pint of cold water for an hour, with the thinly cut rind of two lemons. Dissolve about 3 oz. of sugar in a gill of water, mix with the gelatine, and stir over the fire for a few minutes. Strain, add the juice of the lemons. Beat the whites of three eggs to a stiff froth, and stir them in lightly as soon as the jelly begins to set, and which fill the whole is light and spongy, then heap on a glass dish.

APPLE CAKE.—Take half a teaspoonful of salt and two teaspoonfuls of baking powder to one pint of sifted flour. Sift together several times. To one cup of sweet milk with two tablespoonfuls of melted butter and one beaten egg. Stir this into the flour and add enough more milk to make a soft dough. Roll this crust until it is half an inch thick, then spread over the bottom of a long, shallow pan well greased. Pare and quarter six tart juicy apples and press the sharp side into the dough. Sprinkle with cinnamon, brown sugar and bits of butter. Let the oven be hot, and bake quickly until the apples and crust are a light, wholesome brown.

SOCIETY

THE King and Queen, says the *Outlook*, have declared their intention of keeping on Sandringham, and residing there, for certain months in the year, but their visits will necessarily be very much less frequent, as they will have to spend some time at Windsor Castle, while the autumn months will be spent at Osborne and Balmoral. Their Majesties have not yet decided whether or no they will give up the occupation of Marlborough House; but as alterations are being made at Buckingham Palace, it seems probable that they will do so.

DURING the stay of the King and Queen at Windsor there was a family council, when all the jewels of the late Queen Victoria were divided among her daughters and daughters-in-law; and arrangements were made for giving little personal souvenirs to some of her old friends and attendants. The jewels which have come to Queen Alexandra are some very beautiful pearls.

THE harness worn by the cream-coloured horses is worth no less a sum than fifteen thousand pounds, all the fittings being of solid gold. It was new at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, and the occasion of the opening of Parliament was only the third time it had been used.

The small and beautiful crown worn by Queen Alexandra at the opening of Parliament was the same worn by Queen Victoria at the time of the Jubilee, and is always known as the Jubilee crown. Queen Alexandra has shown in every little detail the tenderest reverence for Queen Victoria's memory, and it is said that she even refused to be addressed as "Your Majesty" until after the funeral.

THE King is quite determined that whenever the coronation takes place it shall be conducted on a scale of great magnificence. It will in many ways resemble the coronation of the Stuart kings; and a great deal of ritual will be observed. It is also His Majesty's intention that the peers shall walk in procession from the House of Lords to Westminster Abbey. There was an idea that they should have followed in the procession of the Queen's funeral through London, but the distance was too far. The coronation banquet may possibly be revived; it fell into disuse at the time of the accession of William IV. and of the late Queen.

IT is only at the coronation of a Queen or Queen-Consort that peeresses may wear their coronets and robes; and even then they are not allowed any pages, although these are allowed to the peers, and must be boys under fourteen years of age. The length of their trains will vary according to rank. A Duchess will have her train three yards long, a Marchioness two-and-a-half, Countesses are limited to two yards, Viscountesses to one-and-a-half, and Baronesses to one yard.

AMID the many conflicting rumours which are current concerning the Coronation, it is not generally remembered that a great officer of State will have to be appointed for the occasion. That officer is the Lord High Steward, for just as there is a Lord Great Chamberlain as well as a Lord High Chamberlain, so there is a Lord High Steward as well as a Lord Steward of the Household. The position has not been regularly held since its tenure by Simon de Montfort. The office was revived twice during the reign of Queen Victoria, once in 1838, and again in 1841.

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Helpful Talks

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BY THE EDITOR

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

EXHIBITION.—International exhibitions were held as follows: London, in 1851; Paris, 1855; London, 1862; Paris, 1867; Vienna, 1873; Philadelphia, 1876; Paris, 1878; Paris, 1889; Chicago, 1893; Paris, 1900.

NOSE.—Your sweetheart was right in reprimanding you for such a silly and vulgar act as wearing rings outside of your gloves. A baby might be excusable for such a childish act, but a grown woman who is guilty of it deserves only contempt for her vulgarity.

STAMMERING.—Lisping may be cured by a little care in the utterance of sibilant words. When you are about to pronounce any word with the letter "s" in it, try to utter it slowly with the tongue touching the inside of the upper teeth. Do not let the tongue pass beyond the teeth. Practising with such words will soon enable you to overcome the difficulty.

CURIOUS.—You will find the oldest bank note in existence in the British Museum. It is a Chinese bank note of the Ming Dynasty, and was issued about 1266. No earlier specimen of paper money is known to be extant. It is, however, a comparatively modern specimen for China, although it was not till three hundred years after its issue that bank notes were used in Europe.

ADELA.—We wear high heels to our shoes because it is the fashion, and because those who make our boots and shoes think it smarter to have high heels instead of low, flat heels, which would be much more sensible and healthy, and a woman ought to take as much care of her heels as of her head. If you find the high heels give you corns, as they are almost sure to do by driving the foot forward in an unnatural way, why get low heels by all means, despite the smart pictures the boot-makers display to entrap the unwary female.

SIR JOHN.—It is usually small-souled people who are censorious. They are secretly dissatisfied with themselves, and they gain a farcical elevation in their own little minds by berating others. The people who are doing things are too busy to spend their time in finding fault with their fellow-creatures. I heartily sympathise with you in the position in which you are placed, where you are condemned to bear the daily tirades of a narrow-minded person, and I appreciate your courage in risking your situation rather than admit even a tacit compliance.

AUNT KATE.—There are very many happy old maids, and of late years girls do not seem inclined to make marriage their goal. Your case is different, however. You are not young—please don't let this hurt you—and you are absolutely dependent on friends, who seem to treat you with coldness. You have now a good offer, and peering between the lines of your exceedingly interesting letter, I plainly discern that you care for him. Why, then, refuse him? About the most miserable creature on the face of the earth is that old maid who holds the memory of having wantonly rejected an ardent suitor. She becomes embittered, mournful, envious, and altogether unpleasant. My advice is, marry this good man, and let your life expand and your ideas broaden. There is no state of life so sane or so healthful as that of marriage.

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